

**CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL METHODS
AND THE NEW MEASURES CONTROVERSY**

A THESIS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is gratefully dedicated:

To my wife Mary Sue. Without your constant love, support, prayers, and encouragement not only would I have never finished this thesis, but I would never have gotten “out of the boat,” and I would not be the man I am today. I love you.

A wife of noble character is her husband's crown.

-- Proverbs 12:4, NIV

I am a blessed man.

To my children – Erin, Lindsay, and Nathan. You are loved more than you will ever know. I am grateful and proud to be your Dad. And I always will be.

Children are God's best gift.

-- Psalm 127:5, The Message

I am a blessed man.

To my church family at Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Kingstowne, Virginia. Your patience, prayers, support, and encouragement have been an incredible blessing to me. It is an honor to be your pastor. Every pastor should be so blessed.

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God.

-- Philippians 1:3, New Living Translation

I am a blessed man.

To God be the glory.

CONTENTS

Abstract	v
Introduction	1
Chapter One Civil War in Zion: The New Measures Controversy	4
Chapter Two Revival Methods in Biblical Perspective	35
Chapter Three Billy Graham: His Ministry and Methods	75
Chapter Four Luis Palau: Festival Evangelism	132
Conclusion	156
Bibliography	164
Vita	171

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines revival methods in the context of the “New Measures Controversy” during the Second Great Awakening, which pitted Charles Finney and Asahel Nettleton and their respective allies against one another. The revival methods at the heart of the controversy, along with the theological question of human ability in salvation, are analyzed from a biblical perspective. Recognizing the profound influence of Finney on succeeding generations of evangelists, the methods of the two most prominent mass evangelists of the last sixty years, Billy Graham and Luis Palau, are also examined. Focusing primarily on Graham’s ministry from 1949 to 1957, particular emphasis is given to his commitment to organized prayer in support of his crusade ministry, his use of the invitation at the conclusion of his sermons, the use of an outreach tool known as Operation Andrew, and his commitment to cooperative evangelism. The strengths and weaknesses of Palau’s “festival model” of evangelism are also described through the author’s personal experience with a festival held by Luis Palau in Washington, D.C. in October 2005. The conclusion of this thesis is that while it may be necessary and appropriate to adopt changing methods in changing contexts, as long as the methods are in harmony with the Word of God, the two methods God universally uses to bring revival are the faithful preaching of the gospel and the fervent, faithful prayers of his people.

INTRODUCTION

I am a child of revival. The religious milieu in which I was raised was unabashedly revivalistic. Altar calls were common in the church of my youth. Revival services led by itinerant evangelists were held at least once a year for a week or more. It was during one of those revival services in the summer of 1967 that I, as an almost 12-year-old, responded to an invitation given by a visiting evangelist from Kentucky and went forward to the altar in that small, country church in northwestern Pennsylvania, as a signal of my trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior. It was a decisive moment in my life. By the grace of God I was savingly wrought upon, as the Puritans would say, and so began my lifelong adventure as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Not everyone, even among those who identify themselves as evangelicals, would approve of the methods used to bring me to faith in Christ. For the last two hundred years, since the time of the Second Great Awakening, which began near the close of the eighteenth century and lasted well into the 1830s, disagreements and debates over appropriate revival methods or “measures” have continued among advocates or supporters of revival.

The battle over revival methods came to a head in the “New Measures Controversy” during the Second Great Awakening, pitting Charles Grandison Finney, the champion of the “new measures,” against Asahel Nettleton, the leader of the Old Calvinist camp with its more restrained, traditional approach to revival. Both Finney and Nettleton and their respective supporters were pro-revival. Where they differed was in the question of methodology (and, as I will suggest in Chapter 1, in some critical theological differences underlying their methods).

This thesis examines the New Measures Controversy of the Second Great Awakening in its historical context in Chapter 1. The focus of Chapter 2 is a biblical and theological examination of the most contentious and controversial of the new measures employed by Charles Finney – specifically, the practice of permitting women to pray and speak in public meetings at which men were also present (a radical departure from long-standing New England religious custom); and the use of the anxious bench or some other method, such as the altar call, to urge people to make an immediate response to the gospel with a physical action of some kind in public meetings – along with the underlying theological question of human ability in salvation.

The New Lebanon Convention, convened in 1827 to deal with the New Measures Controversy, did not settle the conflict over revival methods. It has continued within American evangelicalism up to the present day. Even Billy Graham, the preeminent Christian evangelist of the second half of the twentieth century, is not without critics with regard to his methods. Present day evangelists have been enormously influenced by the new measures identified with Charles Finney. While each has made some modifications, there is a sense in which the chain is unbroken from Finney to Dwight L. Moody to Billy Sunday to Billy Graham and Luis Palau. In Chapters 3 and 4, I present an analysis of the ministries and methods of Graham and Palau, two men of God for whom I have immense respect and whose full impact for God's kingdom will not be known until eternity.

Researching and writing this thesis in the midst of the ordinary and sometimes not-so-ordinary demands of being a pastor has been both a challenge and a joy. My

prayer is that in some way it may be a blessing to the church, even if only to enrich our understanding of revival and to increase our desire for it, and that God will be glorified as a result.

CHAPTER ONE
CIVIL WAR IN ZION
THE NEW MEASURES CONTROVERSY

If it can be said that the decisive battle in America's Civil War was fought at Gettysburg on the fateful first three days of July 1863, it can also be said that the convention of Congregational and Presbyterian revival leaders in the northeast which was held at New Lebanon, New York, in July 1827 constituted a decisive moment in the controversy over the use of "new measures" in revivals, a controversy of such magnitude that Asahel Nettleton, one of the chief opponents of the "new measures," referred to the conflict as "a civil war in Zion."¹

This chapter will examine the controversy over these "new measures" in revival as it unfolded in the 1820s and 1830s, focusing in particular on the views and revival practices of the representative leaders of the opposing camps, Asahel Nettleton and Charles Grandison Finney. In addition to providing historical perspective on the new measures controversy, I shall attempt to show that the conflict over revival methods which constituted this "civil war in Zion" was primarily rooted in theological differences between Finney and Nettleton and their respective supporters. It was not merely that they differed with respect to the most effective way to conduct revivals. That they did differ from one another in this regard will be made clear. But at a more fundamental level, their differences in practice – and in their convictions about what they believed to be appropriate measures to be used in

¹ This descriptive phrase is found in Nettleton's letter to Samuel Aikin in January 1827. It is included in Bennet Tyler and Andrew Bonar, *Nettleton and His Labours* (1854; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), p. 344. Quoted in Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), p. 252.

revivals of religion – can be traced to underlying differences in their understandings of conversion and even revival itself.

My intent in this chapter is to provide a helpful introduction to the lives of the two revival leaders who best represented the opposing sides in the controversy, as well as the new measures themselves around which the controversy revolved.

I. CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY

Born in Warren, Litchfield County, Connecticut, in 1792, Charles Finney would become, in the first half of the nineteenth century, “the most talked-about and sought-after preacher since (George) Whitefield.”² Joining the westward migration that took place in post-Revolutionary America, the Finney family moved to Oneida County, New York, where Charles grew up. After teaching school in New Jersey for a few years, Finney returned to Adams, New York in 1818 to begin an apprenticeship in the law practice of Judge Benjamin Wright. On October 10, 1821, at the age of 29, during a revival in Adams, this skeptical lawyer experienced a dramatic conversion, prompting his famous comment to a client on whose behalf he was scheduled to appear in court: “Deacon Barney, I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause, and I cannot plead yours.”³ Eschewing formal theological training but demonstrating unusual power as a preacher from the beginning, Finney studied theology with Presbyterian pastor George W. Gale. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Saint Lawrence on December 30, 1823, and ordained to the gospel ministry on July 1, 1824, less than three years after his conversion.

² Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 196.

³ Quoted in Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), p. 19.

Finney soon burst onto the national scene through a series of revivals in upstate New York, which is where his innovative methods, the “new measures” which came to be associated with his name, were introduced and refined. As Finney gained prominence, he took his brand of revival preaching to such urban centers as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston in the years following the New Lebanon Convention of 1827. Perhaps the high point of his career as a revivalist was the nine months he spent in Rochester, New York between September 1830 and June 1831, where he developed two of the new measures associated with his ministry, the anxious seat and protracted meetings, which will be described along with other new measures later in this chapter.

In 1832 Finney became pastor of the Chatham Street Chapel (Second Free Presbyterian Church) in New York City. Following a trip to the Mediterranean Sea to complete his recovery from cholera and to revive his own spiritual life, Finney gave and then published his famous *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* in 1835, stating, in “one of the most controversial sentences in American religious history,”⁴ that

(A revival of religion) is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means....⁵

Finney eventually left the Presbyterian Church and became a Congregationalist, serving briefly as pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle of New York City (1836-1837) before his long tenure (1837-1872) as pastor of the First Congregational Church of Oberlin, Ohio. An appointment as professor of theology at the newly established Oberlin Collegiate Institute (now Oberlin College) took Finney west to Ohio in 1835.

⁴ This is Hambrick-Stowe’s descriptive phrase. Ibid., p. 156.

⁵ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1868), p. 12.

Finney would also serve as president of Oberlin from 1851 to 1866. Not only would Oberlin become a center of anti-slavery fervor, but Finney's "dynamic presence," in the words of Sydney Ahlstrom, would make Oberlin "a center of influence for revival theology, the 'new measures,' and a growing emphasis on (Christian) perfectionism – all combined with an urgent sense of Christian activism."⁶

Regarded as "the father of modern revivalism," Finney died in Oberlin on August 16, 1875. Of his influence Edmund S. Morgan has written:

Charles Grandison Finney probably affected the daily lives of more Americans in the nineteenth century than any other single individual. His evangelical preaching of moral perfection reached hundreds of thousands and sparked the movement that led to the abolition of slavery.⁷

According to Mark Noll, Finney ranks with Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, and Andrew Carnegie as one of the most important public figures in nineteenth-century America.⁸

Similarly, Sydney Ahlstrom offers this analysis of Finney's significance:

Finney is an immensely important man in American history by any standard of measure. His revivals were a powerful force in the rising antislavery impulse and in the rise of urban evangelism. He was an influential revisionist in the Reformed theological tradition, an enormously successful practitioner, almost the inventor, of the modern, high-pressure revivalism which, as it spread, would have important consequences for the religious ethos of the nation as a whole. Yet Finney was also an extremely divisive figure, and in the Presbyterian church the tensions created by his kind of ministry contributed to a recurrence of schism.⁹

⁶ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 461.

⁷ Quoted in Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Invisible Giants: Fifty Americans Who Shaped the Nation but Missed the History Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 89.

⁸ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), p. 176.

⁹ Ahlstrom, p. 461.

Without doubt the leading revivalist of the first half of the nineteenth century, perhaps of the entire nineteenth century, Charles Finney influenced such evangelists as Dwight L. Moody and Billy Graham by the revival methods he developed and refined. Though he died more than 130 years ago, the revival methods Charles Finney championed remain integral to the religious life of evangelicals in America today.

II. ASAHEL NETTLETON

Sadly, while Charles Finney is well known to students of American religious history, his contemporary, Asahel Nettleton, has faded into obscurity. In fact, he has been called “the forgotten evangelist.”¹⁰ A leading revival figure in New England and New York during the Second Great Awakening, Nettleton’s influence decreased as Finney’s star continued to rise, especially after the New Lebanon Convention failed to restrain the use of the new measures championed by Finney.

Nine years Finney’s senior, Asahel Nettleton was born at Killingworth, Connecticut in 1783. He underwent a conversion experience in 1801, at the age of eighteen, during the early years of the Second Great Awakening. He enrolled at Yale in 1805, where he came under the influence of Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards and a friend of revivals. During his junior year at Yale, Nettleton became acquainted with Samuel Mills, leader of the Haystack Prayer Meeting at Williams College in Massachusetts and the leading spirit behind the modern American Protestant missionary movement. Following his graduation from Yale in 1809, Nettleton hoped to become a foreign missionary, but poor health would prevent his dream from ever being realized. His passion for preaching the gospel to sinners in

¹⁰ Jim Ehrhard, *Asahel Nettleton: The Forgotten Evangelist* (Christian Communicators Worldwide, 1999). Available from www.ccwonline.org/anettel.html. Accessed May 4, 2004.

need of the salvation found in Jesus Christ, however, did not wane. Ordained as an evangelist by the Congregational Consociation of Litchfield County, Connecticut, in 1811, Nettleton spent more than a decade as an itinerant evangelist throughout New England and New York. Much of his ministry in those years was spent in so-called “waste places” of southeastern Connecticut, an area where many of the churches were “small in membership, spiritually inert, and often unable to afford a full-time minister.”¹¹ According to J.E. Thornbury, the churches in this area had been “wasted” or damaged by the recklessness of certain itinerant evangelists during the First Great Awakening in the 1740s, particularly James Davenport, whose itinerant preaching created dissension and disturbances in churches throughout Connecticut.¹²

While he began his ministry in “waste places,” as they were called, Nettleton soon gained a reputation as “a sort of spiritual surgeon, who was called upon to operate upon congregations which were nearly dead.”¹³ Thornbury notes that because he was unmarried (Nettleton was a lifelong bachelor), he could take up semi-permanent residence in the communities in which he ministered, thus enabling him to do effective follow-up work with new converts.¹⁴

Ahlstrom notes:

So fruitful was his preaching, so self-effacing and cooperative was he, and so decorous and unsensational were his methods, that he was soon in great demand not only in Connecticut but in New York and elsewhere in New England.¹⁵

¹¹ John F. Thornbury, *God Sent Revival: The Story of Asahel Nettleton and the Second Great Awakening* (Grand Rapids: Evangelical Press, 1977), p. 48.

¹² Ibid. See also the article on Davenport by Allen C. Guelzo in Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, and Harry S. Stout, *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), pp. 341-342.

¹³ Thornbury, p. 78.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

¹⁵ Ahlstrom, p. 421.

Until Finney arrived on the scene and became the most talked-about and sought-after preacher since Whitefield, it was Nettleton who was being compared to the greatest preacher of the First Great Awakening. “Not since George Whitefield barnstormed the American colonies,” writes Thornbury in his hagiographical biography of Nettleton, “had New England seen the likes of Asahel Nettleton. In 1820, at the age of thirty-seven, he was the leading evangelist of the East, in demand everywhere as a speaker. Admiring young people swarmed about him, beleaguered pastors vied for his counsel, erudite college people sat at his feet and ordinary lay people reveled in his expositions of Scripture. More importantly, legions of new born souls all over New England rose in rank after rank to call him their spiritual father.”¹⁶

Comparing Nettleton and Whitefield, Nettleton’s friend Heman Humphrey said:

They had “one Lord and one faith”—the same love for souls, and the same irrepressible desire to win as many of them as possible to Christ. Each was fitted for the age in which he lived, and for the work to which he was called—Whitefield, to blow the trumpet over the dead and buried formalism of the churches both in Great Britain and America; Nettleton, to “strengthen the things that remained and were ready to die” in destitute churches of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia; and to help the brethren in gathering their spiritual harvest.¹⁷

In October 1822, Nettleton was stricken with a nearly fatal case of typhus fever. While he did recover, he would never regain his former health and strength, and for the next two years he would preach only on rare occasions. In 1824, Nettleton compiled a contemporary hymnal entitled *Village Hymns* to be used as a supplement to the widely-used and much-loved *Psalms and Hymns* of Isaac Watts.

¹⁶ Thornbury, p. 105.

¹⁷ Bennet Tyler, *Memoir of the Life and Character of Rev. Asahel Nettleton, D.D.* (Hartford, 1844), pp.366-367. Quoted in Thornbury, pp. 109-110.

As his health allowed, Nettleton resumed his preaching ministry. During a revival in Jamaica, New York in 1826, Nettleton first received reports of troubles arising from the introduction of “new measures” in revivals in Oneida County, New York. Deeply concerned by these reports, he was nevertheless reluctant to become embroiled in a controversy over revival methods. As Thornbury writes:

Heretofore his battles had been with infidels and out and out enemies of the gospel. Although he had been engaged in minor debates with other preachers about various points of theology, these discussions had taken little of his time and energy. Nothing had interfered with his total concentration on the winning of souls. But the uproar in New York gave every appearance of a major struggle. Obviously, should he get involved with the problems created by the new measures, it would remove him from the revival atmosphere and thrust him into the field of controversy. It also meant that he would be uprooted from his present location on Long Island where his ministry was needed. Added to these considerations was the fact that he was still in feeble physical condition. Since beginning to preach again in 1824 his schedule had had to be carefully measured and restricted. Did he have the physical and emotional stamina for the gathering storm?

But the pressures on him to speak out continued to increase....At length (Nettleton) decided that “the interests of Christ’s kingdom” required him to act. More was at stake here than his own personal feelings or tranquillity.... In the latter part of 1826, he decided that the time for confrontation had come. Nettleton crossed a Rubicon of sorts when he left Jamaica and headed for Albany, to see for himself what was disturbing the churches in that vicinity.¹⁸

The controversy over new measures in revivals would become the major focus of Nettleton’s attention over the next several months, leading up to the New Lebanon Convention in July 1827. (Of the meeting at New Lebanon itself and the respective viewpoints of Nettleton and Finney, more will be said below.)

As Finney’s star continued to rise and the new measures gained wider and wider acceptance as part of the American religious mainstream, Nettleton assumed a less prominent role, though he continued to have a productive ministry. In 1833,

¹⁸ Thornbury, p. 157.

Nettleton joined with his close friend Bennet Tyler and other like-minded Calvinist revivalists, to establish the Theological Institute of Connecticut (which later became Hartford Theological Seminary), founded to combat the “New Haven Theology” of Yale’s Nathaniel W. Taylor.

“Taylorism,” as the New Haven Theology was also called, has been described as a modified Calvinism,¹⁹ which affirmed such historic Reformed doctrines as the sovereignty of God, human depravity, the sinner’s personal responsibility for his or her own sins, and justification by grace alone through faith alone in the atoning work of Jesus Christ alone. But Taylor and the adherents of the New Haven Theology rejected the doctrine of inherited or imputed sin (the notion that human beings are innately sinful), arguing instead that each individual has the ability to choose that which is right and good, including the ability on our own to choose to receive the gift of salvation through faith in Christ. While having the power to make this choice, we lack the will to do so, the Taylorites said, until the Holy Spirit operates on us and moves us to do so. This “Arminianized-Calvinism” was warmly embraced by Finney and the champions of new measures revivalism, including even Nettleton’s former friend and ally in the new measures conflict, Lyman Beecher, the influential New England pastor who in 1832 became president of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. Clearly, it also appealed to the democratic spirit of the age in nineteenth century America with its emphasis on the individual.²⁰

¹⁹ This description is from the article on the New Haven Theology by Christopher Grasso in Daniel G. Reid et al, p. 815.

²⁰ See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* for a discussion of this democratic spirit in nineteenth century America.

Nettleton would continue to teach and counsel students at the Theological Institute of Connecticut until his death at the age of 61 on May 16, 1844.

Baptist minister Francis Wayland, who served as president of Brown University from 1827 to 1855, said of Nettleton: “I suppose no minister of his time was the means of so many conversions.”²¹

Nettleton’s one-time ally and co-laborer, Lyman Beecher, wrote of him:

(His) personal attention to the critical state of individuals in the progress of a revival was wonderful. This is a field in which the greatness of his vigilance, and wisdom, and promptness, and efficacy, lay.... The power of his preaching included many things. It was highly intellectual as opposed to declamation, or oratorical, pathetic appeals to imagination or the emotions. It was discriminatingly doctrinal, giving a clear and strong exhibition of doctrines denominated Calvinistic.... It was deeply experimental in the graphic development of the experience of saint and sinner. It was powerful beyond measure in stating and demolishing objections, and at times terrible and overwhelming in close, pungent, and direct application to the particular circumstances of sinners.

But there was another thing which gave accumulating power to his sermons. They were adapted to every state and stage of a revival, and condition of individual experience. His revivals usually commenced with the Church in confessions of sin and reformation. He introduced the doctrine of depravity, and made direct assaults on the conscience of sinners, explained regeneration, and cut off self-righteousness, and enforced immediate repentance and faith, and pressed to immediate submission in the earlier stages.²²

Beecher was not alone in his admiration of Nettleton. Nettleton’s biographer, J.E. Thornbury, offers this analysis of his significance:

As a private personality or abstract thinker he had only average abilities. It is as a preacher, evangelist, and soul winner that he made his niche in history. As a soul surgeon, as a communicator of gospel truth, and as a promoter of true revivals, he had and has few peers. He has been, and will continue to be remembered as one who did a great deal to establish true religion in the hearts of men and advance the Kingdom of God on earth.... The fact is, that given the

²¹ Francis Wayland and H.L. Wayland, *Memoir of the Life and Labours of Francis Wayland, D.D., LL.D.*, (New York, 1867), Vol. I, p. 106. Quoted in Thornbury, p. 94.

²² Charles Beecher, ed. *Autobiography of Lyman Beecher* (New York, 1864; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), Vol. II, pp. 363-365. Quoted in Murray, p. 199.

extent of his exposure, and the permanence of his converts, he very well may have been, next to George Whitefield, the most effective evangelist in the history of the United States.²³

Clearly, this is a claim which cannot be substantiated objectively. It is somewhat akin to trying to determine whether Babe Ruth, Ted Williams, or Ty Cobb was the best pure hitter in the history of baseball. One's conclusions will turn on the criteria used to reach those conclusions, as well as the presuppositions underlying the criteria selected. In regarding Nettleton as "a promoter of true revivals," Thornbury distinguishes between the Old School Calvinist-brand of revivals he regards as genuine and the Finneyite revivals characterized by their use of various new measures, of which he (like Nettleton) is highly critical.

Whether or not the comparison with Whitefield is fitting, it is unfortunate that the name of Asahel Nettleton has been largely forgotten, for his role as an instrument of God in the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, especially in Connecticut and New York, was profoundly important. His extraordinary skills as a "revivalist tactician"²⁴ were used by God to impact thousands of lives over the course of his ministry.

III. CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER EXCEPT THEY BE AGREED?

If numbers alone were the criterion by which one judged the validity of a revival, not only was Charles Finney wildly successful from the standpoint of his increasing popularity, but he and his revival methods must, therefore, have been blessed by God. Not everyone agreed, of course, for not everyone accepted the premise that his methods were appropriate means to be employed in revivals. Asahel

²³ Thornbury, pp. 232-233.

²⁴ This is Thornbury's term. Ibid., p. 103.

Nettleton was among those troubled by reports of these “new measures” being employed by Finney and others in the Western revivals in New York State beginning in the mid-1820s. Among the new measures Finney introduced in his revivals were:

- A plain, direct, more informal style of preaching than was customary in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of the northeast, including what was considered to be exceedingly bold and harsh language in addressing the unconverted.
- Exerting direct and often public pressure on individuals, sometimes calling them out by name, sometimes praying for unconverted individuals by name in public meetings, which, according to Nettleton, became “an engine of public slander.”²⁵
- The practice of permitting women to speak and pray in mixed public assemblies, an innovation which was a deviation from long-accepted New England orthodoxy and custom. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this was one of the most, if not the most, contentious of the new measures.
- An undue measure of informality, even over-familiarity with God in prayer, as Nettleton described it in his letter to Samuel Aikin in January 1827: “This talking to God as a man talks to his neighbour...telling the Lord a long story about A. or B. and apparently with no other intent than to produce a kind of stage effect.”²⁶

²⁵ *Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and Rev. Mr. Nettleton on the “New Measures” in Conducting Revivals of Religion* (New York, 1828). Quoted in William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959), p. 34.

²⁶ McLoughlin, Jr., p. 34.

- Most conspicuously, the practice of pressing people to make a physical response of some kind in response to the gospel message in public meetings. This response might take the form of standing up or kneeling down as an indication of an individual's decision to submit to God in faith, or it might take the form of coming forward to a designated anxious seat or anxious bench for those who were concerned about the state of their souls and wished to settle the matter immediately.

Finney did not invent the practice of calling people to make an immediate, physical response to the gospel message, though he used the anxious seat and other methods with powerful effect throughout his career as a revivalist. As Iain Murray points out, Finney's anxious seat was only the altar call and the mourner's bench under another name, and the Methodists had been popularizing the use of the public response for a quarter of a century,²⁷ since the days of the Cane Ridge Revival.

While all revivalists, including Nettleton, used measures of one kind or another, Nettleton and his Old School Calvinist colleagues feared that the continued use of these new measures could result in great harm to the churches and inflict enormous damage to the cause of revival itself. Specifically, with respect to the use of the anxious seat or some other physical movement in response to the gospel (such as an altar call), they feared that the movement itself (i.e., going forward) would become so identified with conversion that the two would be seen as one and the same, thus obliterating the distinction between an outward act by the individual and an inward work of grace (a work of the Holy Spirit) upon the heart.

²⁷ Murray, p. 242.

Further, they were deeply concerned about the deception of spurious or false conversions and the effects of such, both on those who falsely believed themselves to be converted and on those unbelievers in the watching world who, upon examining the lives of these spurious converts, might conclude that the Christian gospel is an empty hope.

Nettleton and others were also troubled by reports that some evangelists were coming into communities without invitations from the local clergy and proceeding to stir up the people against their pastors who were not in agreement with the new methods. To Nettleton this was an unconscionable breach of ministerial ethics which threatened the peace, unity, and health of the churches, evoking memories of the havoc wreaked by Davenport during the First Great Awakening. William McLoughlin, Jr. suggests, in fact, that Nettleton himself saw Finney as Davenport *redivivus* to his own Jonathan Edwards.²⁸

As noted previously, Nettleton made the decision in the fall of 1826 to go to Albany to investigate for himself the reports of the disturbances in the revivals about which he had heard. Finney began preaching at the First Presbyterian Church of Troy, New York, in October 1826, at the invitation of prominent Presbyterian pastor Nathan Beman. Before the year was out, Finney and Nettleton met face-to-face on two occasions.²⁹

Charles Hambrick-Stowe writes:

Finney reported to several friends and later wrote in his *Memoirs* that he entered the conversations with Nettleton with a kind of naïve confidence

²⁸ McLoughlin, Jr., p. 33.

²⁹ The dates of these meetings are not known. Murray says they met twice (*Revival and Revivalism*, p. 230). Hambrick-Stowe says they met “probably on two occasions” (*Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism*, p. 62.)

that the two of them could work together in the same way he had worked with so many New School Presbyterian pastors in central New York. Although he had never admitted to seeking the advice of anyone before, he said: “I had the greatest *desire* to see him, so much so that I had frequently dreamed of visiting him and obtaining from him information in regard to the best means [of] promoting a revival.” Finney claimed that he now “felt like sitting at his feet, almost as I would at the feet of an apostle.”³⁰

From Finney’s *Memoirs*, then, it appears that Finney initially held Nettleton in high regard.

Hambrick-Stowe continues:

As Finney tells it, the discussion between the two men touched only lightly on the key doctrinal issues that often divided Protestants – including “the voluntariness or involuntariness of moral depravity” – but reported that on these points Nettleton “entirely agreed with me.” In fact, “there had been no complaint by Dr. Beecher or Mr. Nettleton of our *teaching*.” They objected only to “what they supposed was highly objectionable in the *measures* that we used.” But in the end, Finney’s optimism about the meeting was not rewarded. He quickly sensed that Nettleton was nervous about being seen with him or even having him attend his evening service. Sitting in the gallery, “I saw enough to satisfy me that I could expect no advice or instruction from him, and that he was there to take a stand against me.”

For his part, Nettleton perceived Finney as having approached him with a belligerent attitude. On the second of January [1827] he wrote to Beecher imploring his help in organizing opposition to Finney and his abrasive, divisive, irreverent, and judgmental brand of revivalism.³¹

Having concluded that he could make no progress with Finney himself, Nettleton set out his concerns in a revised letter to Finney’s friend Samuel Aikin in Utica dated January 13, 1827, which was intended for circulation among other pastors in central New York. Its aim, in the words of Nettleton’s contemporary David Porter, was to warn against “the irregularities and confusion introduced into revivals at the

³⁰ Hambrick-Stowe, p. 63.

³¹ Ibid.

West.”³² In the letter, Nettleton described the situation as nothing less than “a civil war in Zion.”

In part, Nettleton’s letter to Aikin said:

The friends of brother Finney are certainly doing him and the cause of Christ great mischief. They seem more anxious to convert ministers and Christians to their peculiarities, than to convert souls to Christ.... Brother Finney himself has been scarcely three years in the ministry, and has had no time to look at consequences. He has gone, with all the zeal of a young convert, without a friend to check or guide him.... I believe him to be a good man, and wishing to do good. But nobody dares tell him that a train of causes is set in operation, and urged on by his own friends, which is likely to ruin his usefulness.

I wish I had the health and strength to shew brother Finney my whole heart on this subject. I have been long wishing to correct some of his peculiarities, that I might invite him into my own field, and introduce him to my friends. Aside from feeble health, one consideration only has prevented me from making the attempt. Some of his particular friends are urging him on to the very things which I wish him to drop. I fear that their flattering representations will overrule all that I can say. And having dropped these peculiarities, his labours for awhile might be less successful; and then he would resort to the same experiment.³³

Whether Finney would have responded positively to Nettleton’s counsel can only be a matter of conjecture, since, whether for the reasons stated by Nettleton or for other personal reasons, Nettleton chose not to attempt to dissuade him. Direct confrontation with Finney, it seems, was not something he was willing to risk.

Finney fired back in response to Nettleton’s circulated letter with a sermon preached first at Utica in January and then in Troy in March based on Amos 3:3: “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” While not referring to him by name, it is clear that Finney had Nettleton and other Old School critics of his revivals in

³² David Porter, writing to Gardiner Spring on May 28, 1827, in *Personal Reminiscences of the Life and Times of Gardiner Spring* (New York, 1866), Vol. I, p. 235. Quoted in Murray, p. 230.

³³ Quoted in Murray, pp. 239-240. Nettleton’s entire letter is reprinted in *Nettleton and His Labours*, pp. 342-355.

mind as he preached this sermon, which was published by friends of Finney in the Presbytery of Troy shortly he preached it there.

In his typically blunt fashion, Finney asserted that the reason impenitent sinners and certain professing Christians alike object to the use of particular methods in revivals of religion is because of “their frosty hearts.” If a person should be critical of the measures used in a revival, Finney argued, it is evidence of the spiritual coldness of that person’s heart. “Holy things,” he said in the sermon, “are offensive to unholy hearts, and while hearts remain unholy, they cannot be pleased but with that which is unholy like themselves.”³⁴ Thus, according to Finney, Nettleton and other critics of the new measures in revivals proved by their opposition to his methods that they were “lukewarm professors” at best and perhaps no better than impenitent sinners.³⁵ Unless they were agreed not only intellectually but in feeling and practice, Finney said, they could not walk together. “If we walk with the lukewarm and ungodly, or they with us,” Finney concluded, “it is because we are agreed. For two cannot walk together except they be agreed.”³⁶

Finney’s sermon, as Hambrick-Stowe notes, was heard as a war cry.³⁷ As one might expect, Nettleton and his allies took it as a personal attack. The “civil war in Zion” was getting hotter. In an attempt to reconcile the warring factions, Lyman Beecher proposed bringing the two sides together in a convention that could, he hoped, settle their differences, agree to correct abuses in the conduct of revivals,

³⁴ Charles G. Finney, *Can Two Walk Together Except They Be Agreed?* (Troy, New York: Tuttle and Friends, 1827), p. 9. Available from www.charlesgfinney.com/1827c2wt.htm. Accessed May 12, 2004.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁷ Hambrick-Stowe, p. 66.

reaffirm the New England-New York evangelical alliance, and return to their common task of winning sinners to Christ.³⁸

Organized by Beecher and Nathan Beman, the week-long convention of ministers was held in the village of New Lebanon, New York in July 1827. Eighteen Congregational and Presbyterian ministers, with equal representation from both sides of the controversy, attended. As Hambrick-Stowe notes, it was not convened as a synod with any ecclesiastical authority; nor was it an “eastern” plot to crush “western” revivalism, and it was certainly not a “trial” of Charles Finney. The convention was designed, as stated in its first resolution, to reach a New York-New England and Congregational-New School Presbyterian consensus “in regard to principles and measures in conducting and promoting revivals of religion.”³⁹

Nettleton, for his part, was a most reluctant participant. Prior to the convention he explained why he did not wish to attend and why he did not believe it could succeed in accomplishing its purpose. He wrote in part:

I have been compelled by ministers to talk and exhaust all my strength, and to spend nearly all my time, for about eight months, on this subject. I have done all that I can; and have been greatly blamed by many for what I have done. I have resigned the subject entirely to the management of settled pastors, whose business alone it is to determine the question, what measures shall be introduced into their churches....

I have no controversy with any man on the subject, and I fear, if I attend, it will be construed into a public controversy, and that it will be impossible to avoid it.

I fear that settled ministers at the East and South have not yet *felt* enough of the evils, to appreciate what has already been done; and that these ministers will be obliged to experience more of these evils, before they will take a decisive stand; and the sooner I withdraw, and leave the whole

³⁸ I am indebted to Hambrick-Stowe, *ibid.*, pp. 66-67, for this description of the intended purpose of the New Lebanon Convention.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

responsibility on them, the better.⁴⁰

Nettleton attended some of the convention sessions, but did not actively participate, persuaded, apparently, of the futility of the whole enterprise.⁴¹

Both sides did affirm the legitimacy and importance of revivals in the New England Calvinist tradition of Jonathan Edwards, but there was considerable debate and disagreement over such matters as the proper role of women in leading revivals, what some regarded as excessive emotionalism in the revivals, the propriety of itinerant revivalists conducting services without the consent of the local pastors (and even, in some cases, accusing the settled pastors of being “dead” or unconverted), as well as what some considered “irreverent familiarity with God” in revival preaching. Most divisive was the matter of women speaking and praying in public assemblies when men were present.

These, as has been indicated, were among the new measures associated with Finney and his allies in the Western revivals. It does not appear that any of the new measures were actually originated by Finney. They became associated with him as he made use of them and popularized them. It should also be noted that Finney did not begin to use one of the signature new measures of his ministry, the anxious seat, as a regular feature of his revivals until the Rochester revival of 1830-1831. Still, as Iain Murray points out, from the outset of his ministry in 1824, Finney sought some method to make would-be converts visibly distinct by means of some kind of physical response.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and the Rev. Mr. Nettleton on the “New Measures” in Conducting Revivals of Religion*, pp. 102-103. Quoted in Murray, pp. 235-236.

⁴¹ This is the assessment of Thornbury, p. 177.

⁴² Murray, p. 242.

No binding conclusions were reached by the New Lebanon Convention, just as Nettleton feared. No consensus was reached on the new measures and their use, and the inability or unwillingness of the convention to rein in Finney and his brand of new measures revivalism marked the decline of Nettleton's influence and opened the way for Finney's meteoric rise to national prominence.

While some might argue that the outcome of the convention was technically a draw, Finney emerged as the clear winner, inasmuch as the convention did not repudiate his methods. Nor did the convention repudiate his theology. Curiously, in fact, it seems there was at the convention no discussion of Finney's theology and his perceived deviations from Calvinist orthodoxy, even though opposition to Finney and his revivals from Old School Calvinists focused on both his method and his theology.

Already Finney and his fellow New School revivalists with the new measures they employed had renounced the Old School Calvinist understanding of the divine initiative in salvation, which seemed to them to undercut any notion of human responsibility and to eliminate any possibility for human response to the gospel. Underlying their use of the new measures was a conviction that it was possible for any person to turn to God, to choose to repent and submit to God in faith. Further, they believed, with Finney as their champion, that revival would occur whenever Christians adopted and used the proper God-given means. This is the meaning of Finney's famous declaration that a revival "is not a miracle.... (I)t is the result of the right use of the appropriate means."⁴³

Whereas Nettleton and the Old School Calvinists in the tradition of Edwards believed that revival was *sent down* from God, that a revival was a "surprising work,"

⁴³ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, pp. 12-13.

as Edwards himself put it, of the Spirit of God,⁴⁴ by emphasizing the right use of the appropriate measures, Finney and his colleagues opened themselves to the charge of believing that revivals could be *worked up* by the use of the right techniques and methods. Given Finney's strong emphasis on prayer and the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing revival, such a charge is unfair. But Finney's own language provided ammunition to his critics.

Nettleton and other Old School Calvinists, including Archibald Alexander and other defenders of Calvinist orthodoxy at Princeton, found Finney's methods *and* theology abhorrent. But it was hard to argue with success in Jacksonian America. Both Finney's message and his methods were extraordinarily popular in the 1820s and 1830s, as he left the "frontier" of western New York following the New Lebanon Convention for the urban centers of Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston, before ultimately making the decision to head west to Ohio in 1835.

IV. THE NEW MEASURES

Several of the new measures have already been identified, such as:

- A new, more direct and informal style of preaching that sometimes included harsh personal language addressed to the unconverted.
- Exerting direct and often public pressure on individuals, sometimes calling them out by name and sometimes praying for unconverted individuals by name in public meetings.

⁴⁴ Edwards' famous description of the awakening at Northampton in 1734 is entitled *A Faithful Narrative of a Surprising Work of God*.

- The practice of permitting women to speak and pray in public assemblies when men were also present (known in that time as “promiscuous assemblies”).
- Overfamiliarity with God in forms of public prayer.
- The practice of pressing individuals to make a physical response of some kind in response to the gospel message in public meetings, most notably Charles Finney’s use of the anxious seat, a designated area where sinners concerned about the state of their souls could come seeking spiritual relief.

Whether it was through the use of the anxious seat or some other means of response, Finney was convinced of the importance of getting his audience to do something as a visible demonstration of their response to the message. Above all, as Hambrick-Stowe indicates, he understood preaching as persuasion.⁴⁵ This would seem natural, given his training as a lawyer. He pressed on his hearers the necessity and the urgency of making an immediate response. And, rejecting the classical Calvinist doctrine of human inability as formulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith, he believed his hearers could choose to respond to his message and submit immediately to God in faith.

In addition to these new measures, Charles Finney also introduced two other innovations which became part of his revival method: anxious meetings (also called inquirers’ meetings) and protracted meetings.

In his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, Finney explained the purpose of anxious meetings as a means of “holding personal conversations with anxious sinners,

⁴⁵ Hambrick-Stowe, p. 35.

and to adapt instruction to the cases of individuals, so as to lead them immediately to Christ.”⁴⁶ This was accomplished in Finney’s ministry in one of two ways: either by spending a few moments in personal conversation in order to learn the state of mind of each individual, and then to speak to the group as a whole, taking up all their errors and removing their difficulties together; or by taking up each individual case separately and getting each sinner to promise to give up their hearts to God.

Finney asserted that his critics objected to these methods on the grounds that they were new.⁴⁷ However, Nettleton and other Old School revivalists, were not opposed to the use of inquiry meetings. Nettleton himself made use of inquiry meetings, as Thornbury notes, not as a means of promoting a revival but when there were signs that a revival had begun.⁴⁸ What Nettleton and his allies objected to in Finney’s use of the anxious meeting was Finney’s pressing of the sinner in distress for an immediate decision which would bring spiritual deliverance. Finney, believing God had commanded individuals to repent, did not hesitate to urge, even pressure, them to do so at once.

In contrast to Finney’s call for immediate action and his gospel of instant assurance, Nettleton would advise those he counseled in his inquiry meeting to go and settle the matters of their heart directly with God. Believing that the true test of conversion is moral transformation, Nettleton and the Old School Calvinists were unwilling to regard anyone as a convert solely on the basis of a profession of faith.

Bennet Tyler said of his friend Nettleton:

He never told persons that they had reason to hope. He would set before

⁴⁶ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, p. 248.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Thornbury, p. 114.

them, with great plainness, the distinguishing evidences of regeneration, and enjoin it upon them to be faithful and honest in the application of these evidences to themselves.⁴⁹

Yet another innovation not invented by Finney but adopted and adapted by him with great effect was the protracted meeting, first used by Finney during the Rochester revival of 1830-1831. The term refers to an extended revival meeting over several consecutive days, such as a three or four day meeting, with preaching services and prayer meetings held each day during that period. Protracted meetings could even extend for several weeks.

Finney contended that protracted meetings were nothing new. The Jewish festivals of the Bible, he said, were nothing but protracted meetings.⁵⁰ They had been used by Presbyterians in Scotland long before they were introduced in America. The protracted meeting, as described by Charles Hambrick-Stowe, was “an urban and village evangelistic program” in which “several ministers would join forces for an intensive campaign with meetings in the morning, afternoon, and evening.”⁵¹

Finney cautioned that there should not be so many public meetings as to interfere with what he called “the duties of the closet and of the family.”⁵² He warned that spiritual harm could come to individuals and families if unnecessary and unreasonable demands were made upon them during a protracted meeting. He also wisely cautioned against the danger of depending on a protracted meeting to produce a revival, as well as the error of believing that a revival cannot occur without a

⁴⁹ Tyler and Bonar, *Nettleton and His Labours*, p. 135. Quoted in Murray, p. 215.

⁵⁰ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, p. 248.

⁵¹ Hambrick-Stowe, p. 114.

⁵² Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, p. 251.

protracted meeting.⁵³ Even Finney, the apostle of the new measures, did not claim his methods would automatically result in revival. It depends on “the right use of the constituted means” and the blessing of God, for “means will not produce a revival, we all know, without the blessing of God.”⁵⁴

In summary, while Finney himself was not the inventor of most of the new measures he employed, he became their most successful practitioner and their most vocal advocate. A man who, from the time of his own conversion in 1821, was consumed with a passion for the salvation of sinners, Finney was driven to adopt and refine these innovations in his ministry not primarily for theological reasons but because they worked. He was at heart a pragmatist. Once he began to use these new measures, he continued to use them because they were successful. And their success, he believed, signified the blessing of God.

Nettleton and other critics of Finney were opposed to the new measures not because they were new, but, in part, because they were concerned about the use of these methods to create an emotionally-charged atmosphere which would lead to irregularities and abuses in revivals. It is not that Nettleton and his Old School Calvinist allies did not believe in the use of “measures;” they did. They differed with Finney and his associates as what measures should be used. For Nettleton, the means of preaching and prayer were sufficient. When God in his sovereignty chose to pour out his grace in abundance, no other means were necessary. In other words, as has already been noted, for Nettleton and his friends in the Edwardsean tradition, revival was *sent down* by God, not something to be *worked up* by the measures of revivalists.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 252-253.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

V. THE HEART OF THE CONTROVERSY

The conflict between these two great revival leaders, Charles Finney and Asahel Nettleton, cannot be explained simply in terms of personal rivalry or personality differences. That there may have been some degree of rivalry and envy on the part of Nettleton as the popularity and fame of the younger Finney began to eclipse his own is eminently reasonable. That the two men had vastly different temperaments is clear. Finney was bold and brash, unafraid to take on those who disagreed with him. Nettleton, who experienced health problems much of his life, was considerably more shy and cautious. Both were powerful preachers with strong opinions. Neither was known, as Thornbury points out, for a willingness to compromise.⁵⁵ Given the circumstances and the differences in their personalities, that there was a conflict between them is understandable. But it is not sufficient to account for it in terms of a personal issue.

Nor can it be explained as a difference of opinion over methodology. It is not just that Nettleton and Finney disagreed about the best or most effective methods to be used in conducting revivals. Nettleton's vehement opposition to Finney's bold and daring innovations has been made clear. At the same time, Finney defended his methods with the same aggressiveness with which he used them in his revivals. But two men who adopt different approaches to ministry can still "walk together" in common cause if they hold to the same underlying essential beliefs which provide the basis for common goals, such as the salvation of sinners and the renewing of the church.

⁵⁵ Thornbury, p. 168. Thornbury presents a helpful contrast between Nettleton and Finney here.

In this case, the roots of the division between these champions of revival can be traced to their irreconcilable theological differences which found expression in the respective revival methods they used. In the words of Nathan Hatch, Finney “depicted (Old School) Calvinist orthodoxy as the church’s chronic ailment” and “called for a Copernican revolution to make religious life audience-centered.”⁵⁶ While the Calvinist orthodoxy of Old School revivalists such as Nettleton held to a God-centered view of life and of salvation, Finney embraced a much more man-centered view. It is perhaps an overstatement to call it a “jarring repudiation of Calvinist ideals,”⁵⁷ as Nathan Hatch does, but Finney, while acknowledging both, tended to place more emphasis in his ministry on the human role and human ability in conversion than on the divine initiative.

In his preaching Finney stressed the ability of sinners to repent and make themselves new hearts. His famous sermon, “Make Yourselves a New Heart,” based on Ezekiel 18:31 (*Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die?[KJV]*), clearly revealed his belief in the ability of a sinner to make a decision of the will to become a Christian, and that was all that was necessary to be converted or to “make (oneself) a new heart.” As Hambrick-Stowe says: “The evangelism of Charles G. Finney was based on his conviction that every person ‘has the power and liberty of choice’ in the matter of who they will serve and how they will live.”⁵⁸

Finney rejected the traditional Calvinist doctrine concerning the imputation of sin and guilt as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith. He argued and

⁵⁶ Hatch, p. 197.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 196.

⁵⁸ Hambrick-Stowe, p. 80.

preached against the notion that all human beings have inherited a corrupt, sinful nature as a result of the sin of our original parents, Adam and Eve. Finney did not deny that every person is a sinner. But he insisted, in true democratic fashion, that each of us is responsible only for our own sins. Hambrick-Stowe indicates that

Finney refused to believe that “the human *constitution* was morally depraved;” that Scripture taught the “theological *fiction* of *imputation*” of Adam’s sin into every human being; that people were “utterly unable to comply with the terms of the Gospel, to repent, to believe, or to do anything that God required them to do;” or that “God had condemned men for their sinful *nature*.” How could the God revealed in Scripture require obedience while knowing that we could not obey and that he was going to punish us for not doing what we were unable to do in the first place?⁵⁹

In contrast to Calvinist orthodoxy which would assert that we sin because we are by nature sinners, Finney would say that we are sinners because, in actual fact, we sin. What Finney did deny was the doctrine of human inability which had been one of the hallmarks of orthodox New England preaching for two centuries.

Nettleton, in accord with both the Westminster Confession and Jonathan Edwards, whose preaching God had used to stir many hearts a century earlier during the First Great Awakening, believed that sinners could not choose to come to God in repentance and faith on their own. They could only do so if their hearts were first regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Nettleton emphasized divine initiative and human inability in conversion, in contrast to Finney’s emphasis on human initiative and ability. Sensitive to his critics, Finney denied the charge that he left God out of the equation in salvation. While emphasizing the action of the individual, he nevertheless said that the sinner “never does, and never will turn, unless God induces

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

him to do it; so that although the act is the sinner's own, yet the glory belongs to God, inasmuch as he caused him to act."⁶⁰

Over against the Old School Calvinist views of Nettleton, who emphasized God's sovereignty and initiative in conversion, Finney espoused what Hambrick-Stowe describes as the "quasi-Arminian Taylorite-Finneyite view of a human ability to respond to God's call."⁶¹ It was this elevation of human ability and the focus on the immediate response of the individual that so distressed Nettleton and his supporters. In his view it was a grievous error in both theology and practice.

The rift between these two giants of the Second Great Awakening cannot be dismissed as merely a personal rivalry or a personality conflict between two public figures. While this was surely a factor, there was much more to it than this. Nor was it just a disagreement over revival strategy or tactics that prevented these two revival leaders from forging the kind of mutually supportive relationship which would have served to enhance the reputations of both, strengthen the unity of the churches, and aid the ongoing work of revival.

The heart of the conflict between Nettleton and Finney, as exemplified in the controversy over new measures in revival, was neither personal nor pragmatic. It was presuppositional. At its root, it was theological. Nettleton perceived in the methods and message of Finney a shift from a God-centered theology of salvation to a man-centered focus which, for the sake of God's glory and for the purity of the Gospel, could not be countenanced. Finney, on the other hand, saw in the success of his methods and message the distinct smile of God's favor.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Hambrick-Stowe, p. 81.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 77.

Both Finney and Nettleton considered themselves legitimate heirs of the tradition of New England's chief proponent of revival in the First Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards. Finney frequently cited Edwards in defense of his methods.⁶² But it is difficult to imagine that Edwards would have so warmly embraced Finney or endorsed his brand of revival, given Finney's deviations from the Calvinist orthodoxy to which Edwards adhered and the emotional excitement that Finney sought to create in a revival. At the same time, Edwards would no doubt have commended both Finney and Nettleton for their desire to see God glorified in the salvation of sinners.

That Charles Finney triumphed in the conflict with Asahel Nettleton over new measures in revival is indisputable. His brand of "Arminianized Calvinism," as Garth Rosell refers to it,⁶³ won the day and continues to have a significant influence upon evangelicalism in America today. Whether or not the message and methods of Finney were in accord with the teaching of the Bible, they proved to be far more popular with the American public and its religious leaders alike than the Old School Calvinism of Asahel Nettleton.

Because it was rooted in theology and not ultimately in issues of personality or pragmatics, the controversy between Finney and Nettleton could not be resolved without one of them compromising deeply held convictions. The methods we employ in evangelistic outreach and revival flow out of our theological convictions. It was because their theological understandings of conversion and revival were so different

⁶² In his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, Lecture XIV, "Measures to Promote Revivals," for example, Finney observes that Edwards "was famous in his day for new measures." Finney then refers to Edwards' refusal to baptize the children of "impenitent parents" as an example of Edwards' adoption of "new measures." Aside from Finney's questionable characterization of the baptism practices of Edwards' grandfather and predecessor at Northampton, Solomon Stoddard, Edwards' position regarding baptism really was not new. Rather, it was a return to the stricter Puritan practice in New England prior to the adoption of the Half-Way Covenant.

⁶³ Garth M. Rosell, "Charles Grandison Finney," in Daniel G. Reid et al, p. 440.

that Finney and Nettleton could not come to an agreement regarding the proper measures to be used in revivals of religion.

* * * * *

In the next chapter, we will examine from a biblical perspective the primary points of contention in the new measures controversy: namely, the appropriate role of women in public meetings; the use of the altar call (or some other means of eliciting a physical response to the gospel); and the question of human ability in the salvation process.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIVAL METHODS IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Theologian J. I. Packer has defined revival as “a work of God by his Spirit through his Word bringing the spiritually dead to living faith in Christ and renewing the inner life of Christians who have grown slack or sleepy. In revival God makes old things new, giving new power to law and gospel, and new spiritual awareness to those whose hearts and consciousness have been blind, hard and cold. Revival thus animates or reanimates churches and Christian groups to make a spiritual and moral impact on communities.”¹

It is nothing less than a sovereign work of God sent by the Holy Spirit to awaken unbelievers and bring them to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and to bring renewed spiritual vitality to the church, producing in the lives of believers a deeper love for God, and a more active concern for and commitment to our neighbors.²

The Second Great Awakening, which began in America in the last decade of the eighteenth century and continued at least into the 1830s (some would argue it continued almost to the beginning of the Civil War, up to and including the Prayer Meeting Revival of 1857 and 1858), was a remarkable period of spiritual fervor and renewed spiritual vitality that produced a harvest of thousands of souls for the kingdom of God and was used by God to renew and deepen the spiritual lives of many thousands of believers in Christ, as well as spurring on many of those believers to become actively involved in the social concerns of their day.

¹ Quoted in The National Revival Network, “An Urgent Appeal,” p.12. Web article from www.harvestprayer.com/ua/text/define.html. Accessed August 23, 2006.

² Garth M. Rosell, Doctor of Ministry seminar, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC, January 2004.

As glorious as the Awakening was in its impact on individual lives and churches, however, it was not without controversy, even among its leaders. The emergence of Charles Grandison Finney as a prominent figure in the revivals within a few years of his own conversion in 1821, created a stir among the established revival leaders in New York and New England, including Asahel Nettleton and Lyman Beecher. As noted in Chapter 1, Finney and the innovative revival methods he adopted, known as “new measures,” became the lightning rod for a conflict which reached such a level that Nettleton famously referred to it as a “Civil War in Zion.”³

Supporters of Finney and the new measures as well as revival leaders opposed to these innovations met at New Lebanon, New York in July 1827, in an attempt to reach a common understanding and agreement regarding the propriety and use of the contested revival methods.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine from a biblical perspective just two of the several new measures adopted and employed by Finney and associated in the popular mind with his style of revivalism: the practice of permitting women to speak and pray in public meetings at which men were also present; and the use of the anxious bench or some other method, such as the altar call, of urging people to make an immediate response to the gospel message with a physical action in public meetings. In addition, the biblical teaching on the theological question of human ability in salvation will be examined, for this lay at the heart of the conflict between

³ Nettleton used this descriptive phrase in a letter to Samuel Aikin in January 1827. It is included in Bennet Tyler and Andrew Bonar, *Nettleton and His Labours* (1854; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), p. 344. Quoted in Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), p. 252.

Finney and his “Arminianized Calvinism”⁴, on the one hand, and the Old School Calvinist revivalists such as Nettleton, on the other.

I. WOMEN IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

It was not Charles Finney’s intent to create a stir by allowing women to speak and pray in public meetings where men were also present. It does not appear to have been a premeditated innovation on Finney’s part, but it became the most controversial of the new measures associated with him and was the most heated point of contention at the New Lebanon Convention. Finney himself says little about the practice in his *Memoirs*,⁵ but he does acknowledge that it was not an innovation that he himself introduced.⁶ Nevertheless, it became a pivotal and explosive issue, indeed the most volatile issue, in the new measures controversy.

While Finney was accused of introducing the practice of permitting women to pray and speak in mixed assemblies, he was not the first to permit the practice. John Wesley, as Nancy Hardesty has pointed out, allowed women to be class leaders and lay preachers in the early days of British Methodism.⁷ It was one of Finney’s early converts, Theodore Dwight Weld, who promoted the practice of women testifying in “promiscuous assemblies” immediately after his conversion during Finney’s revival in Utica, New York, in 1825. In a letter to Angelina and Sarah Grimke, Weld wrote:

The very week that I was converted to Christ in the city of Utica during a powerful revival of religion under brother Finney – and the first time I ever

⁴ This term is used by Garth M. Rosell in “Charles Grandison Finney” in Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, and Harry S. Stout, *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), p. 440.

⁵ Charles G. Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text*, ed. Garth M. Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁷ Nancy A. Hardesty, *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991), p. 84.

spoke in a religious meeting – I urged females both to pray and speak if they felt deeply enough to do it, and not to be restrained from it by the fact that they were *females*. I made these remarks at a meeting when not less than two hundred persons were present of both sexes, and *five* ministers of the gospel at least, and I think more. The result was that seven females, a number of them the most influential female Christians in the city, confessed their sin in being restrained by their sex, and prayed publicly in succession at that very meeting. It made a great deal of talk and discussion, and the subject of female praying and female speaking in public was discussed throughout western New York.⁸

It was at the New Lebanon Convention that the issue finally came to a head. The critics of Finney and his new measures proposed a resolution which declared that, “In social meetings of men and women, for religious worship, females are not to pray.”⁹ A prolonged and heated debate ensued, with impassioned arguments on both sides. The debate, which began on Thursday, July 19, continued through the morning and into the afternoon of Friday, July 20. At one point, according to Finney:

Dr. [Lyman] Beecher brought up that objection and argued it at length, insisting upon it that the practice [of women praying in public meetings] was unscriptural and inadmissible. To this Dr. [Nathaniel] Beman replied in a very short address, showing conclusively that this practice was familiar to the apostles; and that in the eleventh chapter of Corinthians the apostle called the attention of the church to the fact that Christian females had given a shock to eastern prejudice by their practice of taking part and praying in their religious meetings without their veils. He showed clearly that the apostle did not complain of their taking part in the meeting, but the fact that they did so laying aside their veils; which had given a shock to their prejudices, and given an occasion to heathen opposers to complain that Christian women appeared publicly in their assemblies and took part in them, especially prayed in them, without being covered with their veils. He did not attempt to reprove the practice of their praying, but simply admonished them to wear their veils when they did so. To this reply of Dr. Beman no answer was made or attempted. It was manifestly too conclusive to admit of any refutation.¹⁰

The practice was an affront to long-standing New England social custom. But Finney and his supporters refused to back down. And in the end, the Convention,

⁸ Quoted in Hardesty, pp. 84-85.

⁹ Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney 1792-1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), p. 136.

¹⁰ Finney, *Memoirs*, p. 220.

comprised equally of Finneyites and his critics, could reach no decision on this divisive issue.

What the Bible Says

The key biblical texts for a consideration of the proper role of women in public worship include **1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35, 1 Timothy 2:8-15, and Galatians 3:28.**

David M. Scholer acknowledges the need for humility in interpreting passages such as these when he says: “The concept of genuinely objective biblical interpretation is a myth. All interpretation is socially located, individually skewed, and ecclesiastically and theologically conditioned.... All biblical interpreters, regardless of where they now stand on the issue of women in ministry, have been deeply influenced by both the sexism and misogyny of our culture and also the currents of nineteenth-century women’s rights and twentieth-century feminist movements.”¹¹ This is a helpful reminder for all biblical scholars, especially in seeking the meaning and application of passages such as these, which have been a source of controversy at different times in the history of the church.

First Corinthians 14:34-35 appears to be absolute in its prohibition of women speaking in the context of public worship. The New International Version (NIV) translation reads:

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a

¹¹ David M. Scholer, “1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church’s Ministry” in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pp. 213-214. Quoted in William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 46* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 103.

woman to speak in the church.¹²

Similarly, in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, in a passage giving instructions to both men and women for worship, Paul says:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

For many biblical scholars, as for many Christians and even denominations, these two passages are determinative and absolute in prohibiting women from exercising any teaching office or governing authority in the church. Quite apart from the question of ordination to ministry, it is held that these passages preclude women from participating in any kind of leadership capacity in the worship life of the congregation, since in both passages the apostle Paul unequivocally calls women to silence in a posture of submission.

The most serious difficulty with this view is that in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul is also dealing with matters related to public worship, the apostle clearly assumes without criticism or condemnation the fact that women as well as men were praying and prophesying in the worship services of the Corinthian church. The concern Paul expresses here has to do not with the question of whether or not women are participating in these public ministries, but whether they are doing so with their heads covered, in keeping with the cultural custom of the day. So he says in 1 Corinthians 11:5:

Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head – it is just as though her head were shaved.

¹² All Scripture references are from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

It appears from this that Paul both accepted as normal and expected that men and women alike would pray and prophesy in the public gatherings of the church at Corinth. In addition, there was the dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the nascent Christian community in Jerusalem, described in Acts 2:17-18, followed by Peter's Pentecost sermon in which he announced the fulfillment of this prophecy of Joel 2:28-29:

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Paul's primary concern in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, then, was not the fact of women praying or prophesying in the church. He was concerned that they should wear a proper head covering when they did so. Biblical scholars differ in their opinions as to the reason for the head covering. Many believe the head covering was a sign of submission to male leadership. This is the view, for example, of Thomas Schreiner, who argues that the major thrust of 1 Corinthians 11:3-6 is this:

Women can pray and prophesy in public, but they must do so with a demeanor and attitude that supports male headship because in that culture wearing a head covering communicated a submissive demeanor and feminine adornment. Thus, Paul does not forbid women to participate in public worship, yet he does insist that in their participation they should evidence a demeanor that is humble and submissive to male leadership.¹³

Susan Foh, agreeing that this passage teaches that both men and women should actively participate in the church's worship by praying and prophesying, says the restriction that a woman's head is to be covered is a universal principle that remains

¹³ Thomas R. Schreiner, "Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), p. 132.

binding today, so that the glory may go to God and not to a woman's husband. This requirement, she says, is necessary because of the husband's headship or authority over his wife.¹⁴ The principle of male headship or leadership in the church and the home, for both Foh and Schreiner, is a biblical principle that must not be compromised, for it is rooted in God's design in creation itself.

Other biblical scholars understand Paul's teaching concerning a woman's head covering to reflect a concern for cultural sensitivity and propriety. Paul did not want the church or its members to be open to the charge of disorderly or inappropriate conduct, to which they would needlessly subject themselves if their women flouted accepted social customs by participating in public worship services without their heads covered. It was a demonstration of emancipation on the part of some of the Corinthian women, and Paul told them they should not do it. The apostle, as Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld point out, was concerned that Christian practice not unnecessarily run counter to the accepted moral and social norms in society. He did not want unbelievers to think that Christians were behaving inappropriately and therefore be repulsed by the behavior and dress of their women. He did not want the women, either by their mode of dress or their behavior, to be a stumbling block to outsiders. What Paul counsels, say Tucker and Liefeld, is not capitulation or conformity to culture, much less a personal lapse into old rabbinic modes of thought, but a deliberate approach to society based on biblical principles. By being properly attired, including a covering on her head, a woman would avoid criticism from both conservative Jews and pagans. Paul's driving principle seems to be that the church

¹⁴ Susan Foh, "A Male Leadership View," in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, ed. Bonnie Dell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press:1989), p. 87.

must not be drawn into pagan ways, but, at the same time, it must make sure that its moral distinctives are not expressed in such unconventional ways that they appear to be immoral.¹⁵

F. F. Bruce explains Paul's position this way:

In the cultural milieu with which Paul was most familiar (both Jewish and Tarsian) it was not normally reckoned proper or seemly for a woman to... appear in public with her head uncovered, still less to pray to God in public thus; this is something which he invites his readers to judge for themselves. There is nothing frivolous about such an appeal to public conventions of seemliness. To be followers of the crucified Jesus was in itself unconventional enough, but needless breaches of convention were to be discouraged.¹⁶

What we are left with, as we consider the relationship between 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and Acts 2:17-18 with their affirmations of the public prophetic and prayer ministries of women, on the one hand, and the prohibitions of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15, on the other hand, are three main possibilities:

1. It is a misunderstanding of Acts 2:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 to conclude that these passages permit women to pray and/or prophesy in the church.
2. It is a misunderstanding of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15 to conclude that these passages prohibit all vocal participation in the public worship life of the church.
3. Scripture contradicts itself.¹⁷

The third option is flatly rejected in this thesis. This thesis is written in the conviction that the Bible is the inspired, infallible and authoritative Word of God, and that, rightly understood, it does not and cannot contradict itself. With regard to the first option, it should be clear that both Paul and Peter (and the Holy Spirit at Pentecost) recognized and affirmed the validity of the spoken ministry – the

¹⁵ Ruth A. Tucker and Walter L. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 456-457.

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians: The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971; reprint 1984), p. 107.

¹⁷ Tucker and Liefeld identify these theoretical possibilities in *Daughters of the Church*, p. 457.

ministries of prayer and prophecy in the worshipping community – by both men and women.

Having considered the teaching and implications of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 as they relate to women speaking and praying in worship, what remains is to examine the teachings of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15 in their contexts to see how they relate to the affirmations of women's ministries in Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 11.

These passages are admittedly difficult to reconcile with 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and other passages which suggest a more active, vocal role for women in the church's life.¹⁸ Some scholars, most notably Gordon Fee,¹⁹ have suggested that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is not authentically Pauline; it was not part of the original text but was inserted later by a scribe to make Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14 agree with 1 Timothy 2.²⁰ Fee's postulation has not gained a wide following.

Another possibility, though few biblical scholars support this view, is that verses 34 and 35 do not represent Paul's position. Instead, it is suggested, Paul is actually repeating a position held by some of the Corinthians to which he himself was opposed. It was the Corinthians, then, not Paul, who were asserting that women were to be silent in the church and were to ask their husbands at home if they had questions, instead of speaking out and raising questions in the context of the worshipping community. Verse 36, in this view, constitutes the apostle's response:

¹⁸ Passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31; Romans 12:3-8; and 1 Peter 4:10-11, for example, speak of the gifting of every believer for service in the fellowship. In addition, Paul held in high esteem such co-workers in the faith as Priscilla (Acts 18; Romans 16:3), Phoebe (Romans 16:2), Junias (Romans 16:7), and Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi (Philippians 4:2-3).

¹⁹ See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 705.

“Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?”

While it is an intriguing view, there seems to be no evidence to support it.

Unless the demand for silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is absolute (and most biblical scholars acknowledge on the basis of other passages of Scripture that it is not) there must be some particular problem or circumstance that Paul is addressing in the church at Corinth. As Manfred Brauch has put it:

If Paul believed that women should be silent in the churches in a comprehensive, universal sense, he would not have spent so much time (in chapter 11) instructing women what to do with their heads; he would have simply forbidden their practice of praying and prophesying in the assembled congregation.²¹

Upon close examination, it is apparent that there are actually three groups who are “silenced” in 1 Corinthians 14 as Paul gives instructions for orderly worship: speakers in tongues in the event there is no one to interpret (14:27-28); one prophet when another prophet receives a revelation from God (14:30-31); and women whose speaking was in some sense inappropriate and disgraceful (14:34-35). The same Greek verb, *sigao* (to keep quiet), is used in each case. It is used of the one speaking in tongues in verse 28. It is used of the first prophetic speaker in verse 30. And, although the NIV translates it differently in verse 34 (“women *should remain silent* in the churches”), it the same word there as well.

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct with certainty the circumstances in Corinth which Paul was addressing, since the text of 1 Corinthians does not provide us with sufficient information, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul was dealing with a local situation in the Corinthian church. Some women may have been exploiting the freedom they had found in Christ in disorderly ways and were

²¹ Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), pp. 168-169.

disrupting the worship life of the church. It may be that there were women expressing their spiritual gifts in inappropriate ways, refusing to submit properly to other prophets or church leaders. If so, the directive given in verse 34 that “women must be in submission” may not refer specifically or primarily to their husbands or to male church leaders, as traditionally thought, but to other prophets who have revelations from God to impart to the worshipping community, “so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged” (14:30-31).

Or, as F. F. Bruce suggests, it may be a practical matter in which Paul forbids the Corinthian women to interrupt the church services by asking questions which could more properly be addressed to their husbands at home, or by taking part in the discussion of prophetic messages “with more ardor than intelligence.” Bruce himself, however, is not convinced that Paul’s expressions in 14:34-35 can be understood to mean no more than this.²²

Still another interpretation, represented by D. A. Carson, holds that women may participate in the church’s prophetic ministry, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 11:2ff. The point of Paul’s teaching in 14:34-35 is not a blanket imposition of silence upon women in the church, but that women may not participate in the weighing of prophecies which are spoken.²³ Women as well as men may receive the gift of prophetic utterance for the spiritual edification and encouragement of the church, just as both men and women may receive the spiritual gift of tongues or the interpretation

²² Bruce, *I & II Corinthians*, pp. 135-136.

²³ D. A. Carson, “‘Silent in the Churches’: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 151.

of tongues or other gifts of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ But, according to Carson, what Paul is saying here is that women may not take part in any discussion or evaluation of the validity of prophetic messages. Carson's reasoning is that "in the context of the Corinthian weighing of prophecies, [the submission of woman to man] could not be preserved if the wives participated" in the judging of the prophecies.²⁵ This weighing of prophecies would be an expression of a teaching function or authority which, in Carson's view, in light of Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2:11-15,²⁶ the apostle did not permit a woman to hold over men.

While Carson's position has many supporters, as evidenced by its inclusion in the popular *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, it seems strange that women would be granted the freedom, authority and giftedness in Christ to participate in the prophetic ministry of the church, only to be told they could not take part in the Spirit-led evaluation of those prophecies.

The conclusion here is that while different perspectives abound on the precise meaning and application of the injunction to silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, it is not an absolute, universal command. Paul's overriding purpose in this passage was not to lay down a universal principle regarding women in the church, but to promote unity, order, and peace in the church for the glory of God. To that end, if there were women in Corinth who were using their gifts in a manner contrary to God's intention and to the detriment of the church's orderly worship, his instruction to women to keep

²⁴ See Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4 for listings of spiritual gifts in the New Testament.

²⁵ Carson, "Silent in the Churches," p. 152.

²⁶ See discussion of the passage below.

quiet was, as Manfred Brauch says, an appropriate and authoritative word. The principle underlying it is authoritative in all churches, and for both men and women.²⁷

First Timothy 2:8-15 is the most discussed passage in the Pastoral Epistles today.²⁸ Surely it is among the hardest and most controversial. As with the passages in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, Paul's teachings on women here are set in the context of instructions to Timothy concerning worship in the church at Ephesus.

Beginning in 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul has something to say to the men of the church and then to the women of the church. In verse 8, he instructs the men how they are to pray: "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing."

Evidently there was a problem of anger in the church at Ephesus, and it was infecting the prayers of the men of the church. They were acting in anger, even in their times of prayer. Paul called them to put away their anger and strife because it displeased God and was hindering the effectiveness of their prayers.

In verses 9 and 10, Paul turns his attention to the women of the Ephesian church and urges them, likewise, to pray in a manner fitting their identity in Christ. At issue with the women was not a problem of anger but a tendency to dress immodestly and to place too much emphasis on their appearance while neglecting the weightier matters of Christian character and godliness. It is not difficult to conceive that the excessive attention given to their outward appearance was creating a distraction from the proper focus of the worshipping community, which was to be on the Lord of the church. Paul stresses the need for modesty and good deeds, which are of far greater

²⁷ Brauch, p. 172.

²⁸ So says Mounce, p. 103.

value than expensive clothing. While addressed to the context of worship, these instructions, of course, apply to the whole of life, not just to conduct in church, and they are as valid for men as they are for women.

In verse 11 Paul changes the subject from the demeanor of men (verse 8) and women (verses 9-10) at prayer and says emphatically that women are not to teach or to have authority over men (verse 12), but that they are to learn in quietness or silence and full submission (verse 11).

What makes this passage so difficult to interpret is not only what Paul says in these verses but what he does not say. We know the church in Ephesus was being troubled by false teachers (1 Timothy 1:3-4), but Paul gives little specific information about it in this letter, presumably because he knows Timothy knows all about it, since Timothy was right there in Ephesus and was dealing with it on a daily basis. Throughout 1 Timothy, Paul expresses his concern about false teaching and the importance of preserving and guarding the truth of the gospel (1:19; 2:4-7; 3:14-16; 4:1-8, 16; 6:1-5). Since we cannot be certain about the precise nature of the false teaching and its impact on the church – and, in particular, on the women of the church – we must, as Douglas Moo counsels, exercise considerable care and caution in our reconstruction of the situation.²⁹

We also cannot know with certainty what Paul intended as the object of the submission which is commanded in verse 11. To whom were the women to be in submission? And in what context? One possibility is that Paul is reinforcing the requirement that women are to be in submission to their husbands, both in the home

²⁹ Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?”, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pp. 180-181.

and in the church. Another possibility is that it refers to the submission of women to the male leaders of the church.³⁰ Still another possibility is that Paul is calling on the women to be in proper submission to the teachers in the church.³¹

I. Howard Marshall, who favors this last possibility, says that “submission here is descriptive of the attitude or posture appropriate to learning; it implies acceptance of the teaching and of the authority of the teacher. Presumably men who were not teaching would also be expected to learn in quietness and in submission to the leaders (1 Corinthians 16:16; cf. Galatians 6:6), just as women who pray must do so like the men by lifting up holy hands without anger and dispute.”³² Though it is imprudent to be dogmatic on this issue, Marshall’s view seems to make sense in the context.

The force of what Paul is saying in verse 11 seems to be that the appropriate role of women in the Ephesian congregation is to be quiet learners. What this means clearly, as Aida Besancon Spencer points out, is that women are to be instructed. When Paul instructs women to learn in quietness, he is commanding them to be students who respect their teachers’ authority and convictions.³³ This is to say that Paul expected women as well as men to be serious students of God’s truth who listened with quiet attentiveness and deferential respect to their teachers. Listening quietly, Marshall indicates, does not necessarily exclude appropriate dialogue between teacher and students. What it does exclude is speaking out of turn and

³⁰ This is Moo’s view. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

³¹ This is the view of I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles, The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), p. 454.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 454.

³³ Aida Besancon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985; reprinted 1989), pp. 74-77.

thereby disrupting the teacher.³⁴ Evidently that was a problem in Ephesus, particularly among women in the church, and Paul said it must stop.

There is much disagreement as to the force of Paul's statement in verse 12: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man...." Some see this as the expression of a permanent, binding biblical principle that is valid for the church in all times and all places.³⁵ While there is some diversity in both beliefs and practice among those who hold this view, in general, those who hold this position believe that the authoritative preaching, teaching and governing offices in the church are reserved to men only.³⁶

Others, like Spencer,³⁷ emphasize the fact that Paul used the present active indicative form of the verb "to permit" in verse 12, instead of the imperative (command) or aorist. The present tense in the Greek language can refer to presently occurring or continuing action, so that Paul's statement may be interpreted: "I am not permitting a woman to teach or to have authority over a man *at this time*" (emphasis added). We cannot know for sure if this was Paul's intended meaning, but it is at least possible.

Further, it has been suggested that the verb *authentēin* ("to have authority") can also mean "to domineer."³⁸ If that is what is meant here, what Paul is prohibiting is not a woman exercising authority over a man, but an attitude or behavior which is

³⁴ Marshall, p. 453.

³⁵ This is the view of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood as represented by contributors to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.

³⁶ See Moo, for example, in "What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?", pp. 185-186.

³⁷ Spencer, pp. 84-85.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-88.

disrespectful and disruptive in the life of the church. Most commentators, however, favor the traditional meaning of “to have authority.”

While the specifics of the heresy threatening the church in Ephesus remain hidden from us, there are certain tentative conclusions we can draw about the situation which led to Paul’s instructions in 1 Timothy 2. It may be that women in the church at Ephesus were the main advocates of the heretical teachings which were disrupting life in the congregation and in many homes. Or it could be that the women in the church had been especially influenced by the false teachers. One way or another, it is likely that Paul’s directives in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 were intended to address a situation where false teaching was threatening the health and welfare of the church.

Spencer speculates that the Ephesian women were particularly susceptible to being deceived by false teachers because they had not received as much sound teaching as the men.³⁹ They were learning heterodox doctrines and likely transmitting them to others. In addition, we may surmise, they were interrupting and attempting to “correct” the elders of the church. Because of these things, Paul insisted that the women were to learn in a posture of quietness and proper submission to the elders of the church, who were entrusted with guarding the truth and ordering the worship life of the church. Paul’s purpose, according to Spencer, was to restrain the women at Ephesus from teaching until they had been properly instructed and were ready to teach.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 86.

Instead of being a permanent, binding restriction on women that is valid for the church in all times and all places, Spencer argues that 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is a temporary injunction. It is not, however, a temporary injunction that is relevant only to the first century. “It is applicable whenever, but only whenever, women who have not been theologically trained are succumbing to false teachings.”⁴¹

It is difficult to be dogmatic in interpreting these biblical texts. On their face, both 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 seem to end any debate on the question of women participating in an active, vocal way in the worship life of the church by either praying or speaking. But when we interpret Scripture by using other Scripture, such as 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and Acts 2:17-18, and when we attempt to understand these passages in their contexts, it becomes clear that the prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 cannot be as absolute or as straightforward as they appear. Even if one believes, as many Christians and many Christian denominations do, that only men are to serve in the offices of preaching, teaching, and governing authority in the church, and that the restrictions of 1 Timothy 2:12 on teaching and exercising authority over a man have permanent and universal validity for the church, it does not (or should not) preclude a woman from participating in worship by praying audibly or giving a testimony to the grace of God in her life.

Though some scholars view 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 to be determinative in establishing the proper role for women in the church, others see Paul’s revolutionary declaration in Galatians 3:28 as his most significant statement of all relating to women:

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 88.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Not surprisingly, not everyone has the same understanding of this verse. It is universally agreed that in this verse Paul proclaims the full equality of Jew and Gentile, slave and free, women and men in salvation. There is no distinction of race or nationality or sex or social status in Christ. All are justified in God's sight in the same way: by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It is not that these distinctions no longer exist – men are still men and women are still women; racial differences are not obliterated; nor do social distinctions cease to exist any longer – but they do not matter as regards salvation and one's standing before God in Christ. Nor do they matter in terms of the dignity and value of each member of the church. These distinctions are not to create any barrier to fellowship, for all who belong to Christ (Galatians 3:29) are one in Christ and are to treat one another as equals, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Where there is disagreement is whether this verse has implications not only with respect to salvation and equality of dignity, but with respect to roles in the church. Some hold that Galatians 3:28, while affirming the full equality of males and females in Christ, does not support an egalitarianism of function in the church.⁴² Others see an inseparable connection between the spiritual and the functional.⁴³ F. F. Bruce asks this provocative question: "If in ordinary life existence in Christ is manifested openly in church fellowship, then, if a Gentile may exercise spiritual leadership as freely as a

⁴² This is the view of S. Lewis Johnson, "Role Distinctions in the Church," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 164.

⁴³ See Spencer, pp. 67-70, for example, and Tucker and Liefeld, pp. 453-454.

Jew, or a slave as freely as a citizen, why not a woman as freely as a man?”⁴⁴ Bruce contends it is not their distinctiveness, but their inequality of religious role that is abolished “in Christ Jesus.”⁴⁵

S. Lewis Johnson, though, argues that the three antitheses in verse 28 are not parallel.⁴⁶ While the first distinction (that between Jew and Gentile) should be understood primarily in a religious sense, having to do with circumcision; and the second (that between slave and free) has to do with social status; the distinction between male and female, says Johnson, is a distinction arising out of creation, a distinction which is still maintained, in Johnson’s view, in family and church life in the New Testament.⁴⁷ That this distinction in roles is rooted in creation, as Johnson understands it, means that it was part of God’s plan for men and women from the beginning and remains a part of the divine plan for the ordering of life in the home and church today.

It claims too much for Galatians 3:28 to say that it eliminates all distinctions in the church. It is clear from the context that it does apply to justification or salvation in Christ. There is no distinction between male or female, young or old, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, black, white, red, or brown, native or immigrant, or any other kind of classification we may imagine. The ground is level for all at the foot of the cross. Paul is affirming the positional equality before God of all believers in Christ. Through faith in Jesus Christ, all have equal standing before God. All receive adoption rights

⁴⁴ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians, New International Greek New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), p. 190. Quoted in Tucker and Liefeld, p. 453.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 189. Cited in Johnson, “Role Distinctions in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 159.

⁴⁶ See Johnson’s exegesis in “Role Distinctions in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pp. 156-160.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 159-160.

as “sons of God” (Galatians 3:26; 4:5-7). But this verse does not by itself prove what some biblical egalitarians want it to prove, which is that all distinctions of role or function in the church have been hereby removed.

Conclusions

That Bible-believing Christians have come to differing conclusions regarding the proper role of women in the church on the basis of their understanding of the Bible’s teaching should not surprise us. However, to prohibit women from participating actively and vocally in the worship life of the church by praying and speaking of the work of God’s Spirit in their lives, as were at issue in the new measures controversy during the Second Great Awakening, goes beyond any restrictions, temporary or permanent, which were imposed by the apostle Paul on the first-century churches in Corinth and Ephesus.

The objections of Beecher, Nettleton, and the New England faction at the New Lebanon Convention seem to have been grounded at least as much in the social customs of New England as they were in serious biblical exegesis. There is always the danger in any age of having both our understanding of the Bible and our life together in the fellowship of the church held captive in some way by the culture of which we are a part. In this case, New England social custom (which they undoubtedly presumed was based on the Bible) hindered the Old School Calvinists from seeing the liberty given to women in the New Testament.

The Bible, specifically in the teachings of the New Testament examined above, does not prohibit Christian women from praying or prophesying or giving testimonies of the grace of God in their lives in public meetings at which men are also present,

provided that, as in all things, it is done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40) and in a proper attitude of submission to the leaders of the church (1 Corinthians 14:34). When women – and men – do so, God is glorified and the church is edified.

II. THE ALTAR CALL

Miss Callie was deeply concerned about my soul. She was worried that I had not properly become a Christian; that I had not been “born again” or “saved.” My infant baptism, which I could not remember, was thoroughly insufficient in her view. Once a person reaches a certain age, the “age of accountability,” then, in order to be “saved” from everlasting damnation in hell, that person must walk down the aisle of a church (the right church was the subject of eternal debate) and make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

--Mississippi newspaper publisher Willie Traynor,
in John Grisham’s novel *The Last Juror*⁴⁸

That John Grisham could have the title character⁴⁹ in this best-selling novel⁵⁰ explain salvation in terms of walking down the aisle of a church gives an indication of how familiar and well-established in the American experience the altar call has become.

Prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the use of the altar call as a means of inviting men and women to respond to the gospel in faith was virtually unknown. As David Bennett demonstrates in his detailed study of the origins, history, and use of the altar call,⁵¹ none of the three greatest evangelists of the eighteenth century – John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards – used an altar call

⁴⁸ John Grisham, *The Last Juror* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 277-278.

⁴⁹ Miss Callie was “The Last Juror.”

⁵⁰ According to Publishers Weekly, *The Last Juror* was the #3 best-selling hard-cover fiction book for 2004, behind only *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom. Cited in *The Washington Times*, August 21, 2005, p. A2.

⁵¹ David Bennett, *The Altar Call: Its Origins and Present Usage* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000).

or any variation of it in their evangelistic or revival preaching.⁵² All three urged their unconverted hearers to seek salvation without delay,⁵³ but they did not extend a public invitation to their hearers to walk down an aisle, to come forward to an “anxious bench” or other designated area for prayer and counsel, or to make any other kind of physical response to the message of the gospel. James Adams says: “George Whitefield’s sermons were long invitations to men to come to Christ, not to an altar. The same may be said of the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, of the Reformers and of others in the past who were blessed with a harvest of many souls using Scriptural means of inviting men to Christ.”⁵⁴

While Charles Finney is often credited with originating the altar call – or blamed for it, depending on one’s perspective – the practice seems to have developed in the camp meetings which began on the frontier around the beginning of the nineteenth century and had been in use by Methodists for two decades before Finney introduced his version of the altar call, the anxious seat (or anxious bench) for the first time in 1825 at a Baptist church in the town of Rutland, New York. In his *Memoirs* Finney describes the event:

The Spirit of the Lord was evidently poured out on the congregation; and at the close of the sermon I did what I do not know I had ever done before, called upon any who would give their hearts to God to come forward and take the front seats. And I cannot remember that I ever did this again anywhere until I did it in Rochester, N.Y.... A large number arose in different parts of the house and came forward; and a goodly number appeared to give their hearts to God upon the spot.⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid., pp. 1-27.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 90. See also David F. Wells, *Turning to God: Biblical Conversion in the Modern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 91.

⁵⁴ James E. Adams, “Decisional Regeneration” (Semper Reformanda, 2004), p. 7. Available from www.semperreformanda.com/decision.htm. Accessed August 4, 2005.

⁵⁵ Finney, *Memoirs*, p. 115.

During a revival in Rome in 1825, at the conclusion of his sermon each evening, Finney would ask those present “who had been converted that day to come forward and report themselves in front of the pulpit, that we might have a little conversation with them.”⁵⁶ These invitations were not calls for commitment but were for the purpose of meeting those in whose lives God had worked savingly by His grace. Still, they may have served a dual function as the conversations provided Finney with the opportunity to gauge the spiritual condition of the purported converts.

It was not until Rochester in 1830 that Finney made the anxious seat a regular part of his revival method. He explains his reasoning for its use in his *Memoirs*:

I had never, I believe except in rare circumstances, until I went to Rochester, used as a means of promoting revivals, what has since been called “the anxious seat.” I had sometimes asked persons in the congregation to stand up; but this I had not frequently done. However, in studying upon the subject I had often felt the necessity of some measure that would bring sinners to a stand. From my own experience and observation I had found, that with the higher classes especially, the greatest obstacle to be overcome was their fear of being known as anxious inquirers. They were too proud to take any position that would reveal them to others as anxious for their souls.⁵⁷

Finney was determined to find a measure, a revival method, that would break down this resistance born of pride. He does not speak here of the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting sinful men and women of their need for salvation, or of the work of the Holy Spirit in drawing sinners to salvation in Christ. Instead, his emphasis is on the introduction and use of the right measure. One can wholeheartedly affirm Finney’s sincere desire to use the most effective means to reach sinful men and women with the gospel without disregarding or downplaying, as Finney here seems to

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 162. Cf. p. 164.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 306.

do, the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit, apart from which our best efforts will be fruitless.

Finney continues:

I had found also that something was needed more than I had practiced to make the impression on them that they were expected then and there to give up their hearts; and something that would call them to act, and act as publicly before the world as they had in their sins; something that would commit them publicly to the service of Christ; some public manifestation or demonstration that would declare to all around them that they abandoned a sinful life then and there, and committed themselves to Jesus Christ. When I had called them simply to stand up in the public congregation, I found that this had had a very good effect; and so far as it went it answered the purpose for which it was intended. But after all I had felt for some time that something more was necessary to bring them out from among the mass of the ungodly to a public renunciation of their sinful ways, and a public committal of themselves to God.

At Rochester, if I recollect right, I first introduced this measure. This was years after the cry had been raised of “New Measures.” A few days after the conversion of Mrs. _____ I made a call, I think for the first time, upon all that class of persons whose convictions were so ripe that they were willing then and there to renounce their sins and give themselves to God, to come forward to certain seats which I requested to be vacated, and offer themselves up to God while we made them subjects of prayer.⁵⁸

Finney does acknowledge his belief that the anxious seat was one of the means used by the Spirit of God to bring individuals under conviction of sin to a submission to and acceptance of Christ.⁵⁹ Still, he had a tendency to focus more on the right use of means or measures than on the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

As M. G. Bell notes, the altar call was not initially identified with a conversion experience but was an occasion for spiritual inquiry and prayer.⁶⁰ As such it was known by a variety of names, including “the anxious seat” and “the mourner’s bench.” Increasingly, though, as it was popularized by Charles Finney and later

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 306-307.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 320-321.

⁶⁰ M. G. Bell, “Altar Call,” in Daniel G. Reid et al, p. 39.

adopted by Dwight L. Moody, it became institutionalized during the 19th century and came to be identified with a conversion experience.

This, of course, is one of the chief concerns critics of the altar call have with it. The altar call, its critics charge, too easily confuses the physical act of “coming forward” or walking an aisle with the spiritual act of “coming to Christ” in repentance and faith.⁶¹ There is nothing wrong with coming forward, walking an aisle, or praying a prayer. The trouble comes, according to critics of the altar call, when the performance of any of these actions becomes identified with conversion. When that happens, our understanding of the nature and substance of conversion becomes skewed, and some people may be deceived about their spiritual state, thinking that because they responded to an invitation and walked down an aisle, their salvation is assured. But it is not necessarily the case that every person who comes forward when an invitation is given is responding to the gospel in true repentance and faith.

What the Bible Says

Does the Bible support the use of the altar call or some sort of appeal for immediate response to the gospel message involving physical action on the part of the hearers?

We begin by noting that there are no instances in the Bible of an altar call in the modern sense as described above. This is not to say that the prophets and apostles and Jesus himself did not call for immediate decision and action from their hearers on different occasions.

⁶¹ For this and other arguments against the use of the altar call, see Paul Alexander, “Altar Call Evangelism,” (9 Marks Ministries, 2005). Available from www.9marks.org/CC/CDA/Content_Blocks/CC_Printer_Friendly_Version_Utility/1..PTID31452... Accessed August 27, 2005.

As the apostle Peter confidently proclaimed the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, for example, his listeners “were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles: ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” Peter told them to repent of their sins and receive baptism as a sign of their faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:37-38). Peter did not tell his audience how to respond until *they* asked *him*. The call to come to Christ in repentance and faith was preceded by the Holy Spirit’s work of conviction of sin in their lives through Peter’s preaching. However, Peter did not stop there:

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:40-41).

While he did not ask his hearers to take a physical action in response to the gospel message, Peter did call them to make an immediate response to the gospel without delay.

There is plenty of biblical precedent for this. In his farewell address to the people of Israel before they crossed the Jordan River to enter the land of God’s promise to them, Moses, whom God had used to bring them out of Egypt and who had led them in the wilderness for forty years, put before them this choice:

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.... This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you both life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20a).

Moses placed before Israel two alternatives, two roads, two different paths from which to choose. There was no physical act involved in this “altar call,” but it was a clear call to decision and commitment with life-and-death consequences.

Moses' successor as the leader of Israel, Joshua, issued a similar call to commitment to the people of Israel in Joshua 24. After reminding the people of what God had done for them and how the Lord had led them, Joshua presented the challenge:

Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24: 14-15).

It was a public call for immediate response – and this call did involve a physical act. The people were to throw away any foreign gods (idols) in their possession as a sign that they were giving their hearts fully to the Lord (Joshua 24:14, 23). There was a decision to be made and an action to be taken in keeping with the decision.

The prophet Elijah, in his famous contest with the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18, confronted the spiritually weak and vacillating people of Israel with a choice. He said: “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). In the ensuing contest, Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal as the Lord sent fire from heaven in response to Elijah's prayer and completely burned up the sacrifice he had offered, along with the wood and the stones of the altar, consuming even the water that had filled the trench around the altar. Seeing what God did, the people were moved to respond. They fell prostrate and cried: “The LORD – he is God! The LORD – he is God!” (1 Kings 18:38-39).

Elijah called the people to commitment. They responded. Revival broke out. Unfortunately, it was superficial and short-lived. It did not grip their hearts or result in deep-seated change in the lives of the people of Israel.

In the Gospels Jesus did not hesitate to call individuals to repentance and faith and discipleship. In Mark 1:16-20, we find his invitations to Simon Peter and Andrew and to James and John, to “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). That there was a sense of immediacy and urgency about the call is evident in Mark’s description of the call and the response of the fishermen. Verse 18, referring to Simon and Andrew, says: “At once they left their nets and followed him.” Similarly, verse 20, referring to James and John, says: “Without delay he [Jesus] called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” In these cases, the invitation or call to respond necessitated a physical action.

In Jesus’ encounter with a rich young man who asked him what he must do to inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23), Jesus instructed the young man to “go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). Jesus told the young man to take a specific action – not that by doing these things he would earn his salvation and achieve the eternal life he desired, but by so doing the young man would remove from his life those hindrances or stumbling blocks which were keeping him from giving his heart to God and living by faith in him. It was for this young man a very personal altar call, but “he went away sad, because he had great wealth” (Mark 10:22).

What is clear is that the modern practice of extending an altar call or public invitation to respond to the gospel in repentance and faith and discipleship is not a “measure” which was routinely employed either by Jesus, the New Testament apostles, or the Old Testament prophets. But we must be careful not to dismiss or condemn any practices or methods simply because they were not used, or not used regularly, or not explicitly sanctioned by Jesus or the New Testament church. Methods are contextual and may change, as long as the message of the gospel is in no way compromised.

The problem, as has been stated above, is that, in the view of some altar call critics, the message of the gospel *is* compromised or, at least, is susceptible to misunderstanding in the minds of some who may confuse the physical response of coming forward at an altar call with the spiritual response of repentance from sin and faith in Christ. The problem is real. The confusion may indeed be real for some who have not been rightly taught the gospel. But this does not mean that the altar call is inherently bad, or that it serves no redeeming purpose in the kingdom of God.

Confusing the outward act of going forward in response to an altar call with the inward reality of genuine conversion to Christ is a serious problem. In this confusion, going forward – the physical act – may be perceived as being the same as conversion itself. There is no guarantee, of course, that they are the same. Going forward does not save a person; the grace of God does. One does not need to walk down an aisle to receive the grace of God in salvation; that grace is just as available in the pew or at home or the local Starbuck’s, if that is where God chooses to visit us with his salvation and moves us in our hearts to respond in faith. R. T. Kendall, a proponent of

the public invitation, agrees that coming forward in response to an altar call does not save anybody. Salvation is something which must take place in the heart.⁶² It is a mistake to equate the act of coming forward with receiving Christ in salvation. However, says Kendall, the act of coming forward is one way to confess Christ for one who has responded to the gospel message in faith, and it also allows people to seek the Lord and his grace in a public manner, although they may not be sure they are yet saved.⁶³

The real measure of a conversion to Christ is not whether a person has walked down an aisle in response to an altar call, although a true conversion may occur in and through such a response, if the Holy Spirit is at work to bring that person to repentance and saving faith in Christ. It is not going forward that counts, though God has used this method to bring many thousands of men and women to saving faith in him. It is not the “decisions for Christ” that are registered in evangelistic services or revivals that count. Some, even many, of these “decisions” to trust Christ and follow him may reflect genuine conversions. But not all of them will. What counts, as David Wells says, is that “there are men and women who, knowing themselves to be rebels and alienated from God, have sought in Christ forgiveness and acceptance and, having sought and trusted, have been renewed by the Spirit and are impelled on to a life of truthfulness and love.”⁶⁴

⁶² R. T. Kendall, *Stand Up and Be Counted: Calling for Public Confession of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), p. 35.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 78, 83.

⁶⁴ Wells, p. 79.

Conclusions

The altar call has been subject to many abuses since its popularization in the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ It is not without critics, even within evangelicalism. Some criticisms, as have been noted, are valid. Still, to reject the altar call as unbiblical and inappropriate for ministers of the gospel to use in calling people to respond in repentance and faith and discipleship is unwarranted. Must those who use the altar call exercise care to ensure that they are not misleading or manipulating their audience into a response they may not fully understand? Absolutely. It is incumbent on those entrusted with the treasures of the gospel to guard the truth zealously and proclaim it faithfully – without obscuring in any way what is involved in becoming a Christian and living as a follower of Christ. It is the responsibility of the minister of the gospel to explain clearly to his hearers that the physical act of coming forward is not to be confused and must not be confused with the spiritual response to the gospel of repentance and faith in Christ.

Calling men and women, young and old, to respond to the truth of God's Word is the vocation of every minister of the gospel. The altar call, then, is an appropriate revival method. But our trust should never be in this or any other method. Our trust must be in the power of the Spirit of God, who graciously and sovereignly brings revival when and where he chooses, and who moves people to respond to the gospel in repentance and faith in Christ, sometimes by means of an altar call and sometimes without.

⁶⁵ For a description of some of these abuses, see Bennett, pp. 234-237.

III. HUMAN ABILITY

As has been argued in Chapter 1, the heart of the conflict between Charles Finney and his Old School Calvinist critics led by Asahel Nettleton was fundamentally theological in nature. It was not merely about methods or “measures” to be utilized in evangelistic outreach or revival meetings. It was rooted in their different understandings of the process of salvation, in particular, the question of human ability in conversion.

It has already been observed that in his preaching Finney emphasized the ability of sinners to repent and make themselves new hearts. His famous sermon, “Make Yourselves a New Heart,” based on Ezekiel 18:31, is an example of his belief in the ability of a sinner to make a decision of the will to become a Christian.⁶⁶ This belief in what may be called “decisional regeneration”⁶⁷ has had a profound influence on revival methods since the Second Great Awakening.

In contrast to the traditional Calvinist doctrine of the imputation of sin and guilt set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith,⁶⁸ Finney preached and argued passionately against the notion that all human beings have inherited a corrupt, sinful nature as a result of the sin of our first parents. While acknowledging that every person is a sinner, Finney insisted that each of us is responsible only for our own sins. He considered the doctrine of imputation “theological fiction.”⁶⁹ The doctrine of

⁶⁶ See the discussion of “The Heart of the Controversy” in Chapter 1.

⁶⁷ See Adams, “Decisional Regeneration,” for a discussion of this concept. Adams, in my view, while raising valid concerns, is too harsh in his critique of the altar call and of evangelistic calls to make “decisions” for Christ.

⁶⁸ See *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 6: Concerning the Fall of Man, Sin, and the Punishment for Sin.

⁶⁹ Hambrick-Stowe, p. 33.

human inability in salvation, one of central tenets of orthodox New England preaching for two hundred years, Finney flatly rejected.

Nettleton and the Old School Calvinists, on the other hand, emphasized divine initiative and human inability in conversion, affirming that God alone is the author of conversion, in contrast to Finney's greater emphasis on human initiative and ability. Though his focus was on the action of the individual, Finney acknowledged that a sinner would never turn to God in faith unless moved by God to do it.⁷⁰

While Nettleton and the Old School Calvinists stressed God's sovereignty and initiative in conversion, Finney espoused a "quasi-Arminian Taylorite-Finneyite view" of a human ability to respond to God's call.⁷¹ As indicated in Chapter 1, Nettleton considered this elevation of human ability and the focus on the immediate response of the individual a grievous error in both theology and practice.

In short, whereas Nettleton and the Old School Calvinists believed salvation to be monergistic, that is, to be exclusively a work of God, Finney preached a synergistic form of Christianity. He believed that while God takes the initiative in offering the grace of salvation to sinners, it is left to sinners to accept or reject the offer of grace – sinners who, in their unredeemed state, have the ability to decide whether to say yes or no to God's gracious offer of salvation in Christ.

What the Bible Says

Two key New Testament passages bear on this question of human ability in salvation: **Ephesians 2:1-10** and **John 6:44**.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 77.

In Ephesians 2:1-3, the apostle Paul describes the spiritual condition of every person apart from God's redeeming work in Christ. The picture he paints is not a flattering one. He points out three devastating truths about unredeemed human beings, which included us until God himself intervened in his mercy to save us. Paul says that we were dead in our transgressions and sins (verse 1), that we were enslaved to worldly influences and to our sinful nature (verses 2-3), and that we were by nature objects of God's righteous wrath, deserving of condemnation (verse 3).

Spiritually speaking, this is the universal human condition apart from Christ and his saving work. That we are spiritually dead means that there is no life in us. One who is dead has no ability or power to choose any good or to take any action on his or her own. The one who is dead must first be made alive. In verses 4 and 5, Paul says that this is exactly what God has done for us:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

God is the One, Paul says, who has brought us from a state of spiritual death to life with Christ. We have done nothing to make ourselves come alive. Indeed, there is nothing a person in a state of spiritual (or physical) death can do to make himself or herself alive. Only God could do it. This he has done, Paul says, as an expression of his grace. Salvation is by grace alone (Ephesians 2:5, 8). It is a divine work. It is a gift of God's grace. It is not something to which we contribute. As R. C. Sproul notes: "Salvation is both of the Lord and from the Lord."⁷²

Even faith, which is the means by which salvation is applied to us, is a gift of God. God himself creates saving faith in the heart of the believer. It is not something

⁷² R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), p. 160.

we conjure up by our own effort, or the result of a decision of our will. Faith, as Sproul says, is “a result of the Spirit’s sovereign work of regeneration” in the human heart.⁷³ John Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, referred to faith as the “principal work of the Holy Spirit”⁷⁴ and said it is “a singular gift of God.”⁷⁵ Faith, then, is not something we contribute to our salvation, but is a gift of God to those who have been spiritually reborn⁷⁶ or regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

David Wells has observed that without God’s saving action in Christ, conversion would not be possible; without the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, conversion would not be desirable (that is, no one would ever desire it, apart from the Spirit’s convicting power operative in their lives); and without regeneration, conversion would be unthinkable, for regeneration and conversion are related as cause and effect. It is the regenerative, awakening work of God that produces in us an overwhelming desire to turn from sin and conveys to us the ability to believe in Christ, though initially God’s regenerative work may take place below the level of consciousness.⁷⁷ Though we may not be aware of the gracious operation of God’s Spirit in our life, it is only as God by his Spirit breathes new life into the dry bones of our spiritually dead hearts that we can respond to the message of the gospel in repentance and saving faith.

John 6:44 records this intriguing statement of Jesus:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

⁷³ R. C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997), p. 156.

⁷⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Vol. 2, Book 3, p. 541.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 581.

⁷⁶ See John 3:3-8.

⁷⁷ Wells, p. 21.

The key word in this statement is the word *draw*. How are we to understand this “drawing” by God the Father? Some people believe, as R. C. Sproul explains it, that for a person to come to faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit must first woo or entice them to come. They believe, however, that we have the ability to resist this “wooing” and refuse the enticement of Christ. Though this wooing is necessary to bring a person to Christ, it is not sufficient by itself. We cannot come to Christ without being wooed, they say, but the wooing alone does not guarantee that we will come to Christ.⁷⁸

Sproul makes a compelling argument that this explanation is both inadequate and incorrect. The Greek word for “draw” is the word *helko*, which means “to compel.”⁷⁹ “Compel”, as Sproul notes, is a much more forceful word than “woo.” Using the analogy of drawing water from a well, Sproul asserts that “it is as necessary for God to turn us to Christ as it is for us to pull up the bucket to drink water from the well. The water will simply not come out on its own no matter how hard we plead.”⁸⁰ God must bring us to himself in salvation or we will not come.

Jesus did not diminish the responsibility of men and women who rejected him. He reserved his harshest words for the Pharisees and other religious leaders of his day who were so caught up in the trappings of religion and the external duties of keeping the Law that they were spiritually blind – dead, actually – to the presence of God and the establishment of his kingdom in their midst. Jesus did not hold them guiltless for

⁷⁸ Sproul presents this argument in *Grace Unknown*, p. 153.

⁷⁹ Ibid. The word *helko* appears eight times in the New Testament. The New International Version translates it “to draw” three times (John 6:44; 12:32; and 18:10), “to haul” once (John 21:6), and “to drag” four times (John 21:11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; and James 2:6). It is used of drawing a sword (John 18:10), hauling or dragging a net full of fish (John 21:6, 11), and of dragging an individual into court or some other place (Acts 16:19; 21:30; James 2:6). The word typically has an active, forceful connotation. Only in John 6:44 and 12:32 is the word used in a spiritual context.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 155.

their spiritual deadness and opposition to him. But he knew that no one at all would come to him in faith unless they were, as F. F. Bruce put it, “divinely persuaded and enabled to do so.”⁸¹ Unless the Holy Spirit first regenerated them, changing their hearts and granting them the gift of faith, no one would ever come to him on their own.

Conclusions

To Asahel Nettleton and his Old School Calvinist colleagues, their theological differences with Charles Finney regarding salvation were irreconcilable. In particular, Nettleton believed that Finney had departed from historic Calvinist orthodoxy in his beliefs concerning what God does and what human beings do in the process of conversion. Finney, in a democratic era that increasingly emphasized the dignity and power of the individual in American life, gave prominence in his preaching and practice to the ability of individuals to choose to repent and believe in Christ, whereas Nettleton preached from a perspective that only those who were first spiritually regenerated or awakened by the operative grace of the Holy Spirit could and would respond to the gospel in repentance and faith in Christ.

Finney’s critics, however, were not entirely fair to him. While quick to criticize him for his emphasis on the ability of the individual to decide to follow Christ in faith, the Old School Calvinists did not properly acknowledge Finney’s own acknowledgement that the work of the Holy Spirit was essential in salvation. In reality, the gulf between them was perhaps not as great as the adversaries, in their intransigence, made it appear.

⁸¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 156.

From an experiential point of view, it may seem appropriate to place greater emphasis on the human decision in the conversion process, for when we come to Christ we come freely and make a “decision” to follow him in faith. But the clear and unmistakable teaching of the Bible is that it is only by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit operative in our lives that we are able to come to Christ and decide to follow him. We do not, would not, and could not come to him in repentance and faith on our own. Apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead and must first be made alive by the Spirit of God, who quickens our hearts, convicts us of our sin, and gives us the gift of faith to embrace Christ as our Savior and Lord. From beginning to end, salvation is a work of God. It is not a work we perform or a decision we make. It is a sovereign and gracious gift of God.

* * * * *

The influence of Charles Finney and the revival measures he championed on those who came after him was enormous. Even if evangelists such as Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), the preeminent American evangelist in the last half of the nineteenth century, and others, including R.A. Torrey (1856-1928), J. Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918), and William Ashley “Billy” Sunday (1862-1935) adapted Finney’s methods to their own settings and personalities, the shadow of Finney’s influence extended over their ministries and continued throughout the twentieth century in the phenomenal ministry of Billy Graham, which is the focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

BILLY GRAHAM: HIS MINISTRY AND METHODS

In the spring of 1934, when Billy Graham was fifteen years old, some thirty members of the Charlotte Christian Men's Club met in a grove of trees on the dairy farm owned by Billy's father, Frank Graham, for a day of prayer and fasting. They prayed for a revival to bring a new surge of spiritual vitality to Charlotte, and asked God to use them to impact even the whole state of North Carolina for Christ. At some point during the day, the leader of the group, Vernon Patterson, prayed that "out of Charlotte the Lord would raise up someone to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth."¹ As William Martin observes, no one in the group gathered in that grove of trees would ever have imagined that the evangelist envisioned in that prayer was pitching hay into feed troughs no more than a few hundred yards away, nor would anyone have been more surprised than young Billy Frank Graham himself.²

Six short years later, in 1940, Billy Graham was named the outstanding evangelist in his eleven-member senior class at Florida Bible Institute. At commencement in June of that year, with the storm clouds of war on the horizon, class valedictorian Vera Resue noted that in times of crisis, "God has chosen a human instrument to shine forth his light in darkness. Men like Luther, John Wesley, D.L. Moody, and others were ordinary men, but men who heard the voice of God. The time is ripe for another Luther, Wesley, Moody. There is room for another name on

¹ William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), p.62.

² Ibid.

this list.”³ It is not likely that anyone who knew him at that point in his life could have expected or even dreamed that Billy Graham would ever gain the stature of such men of God as these.

One who saw the seeds of greatness in young Billy Graham was the Sunday school superintendent of a small storefront church in Venice, Florida, where Graham preached one Sunday in 1938 while a student at Florida Bible Institute. When he gave the invitation to come forward in response to the gospel, some 32 young men and women out of a congregation of approximately one hundred came forward. It was the first time he had ever given an invitation. The superintendent of the Sunday school remarked: “There’s a young man who is going to be known around the world!”⁴

In the sovereignty of God, Billy Graham would become known worldwide as the foremost Christian evangelist of the twentieth century. According to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Graham has preached the Gospel to more people in live audiences than any other person in history – over 210 million people in more than 185 nations and territories. In addition, hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, film, and web casts.⁵ His one purpose in life, he has said, “is to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Christ.”⁶ God in his providence has used this North Carolina farm boy to lead hundreds of thousands of individuals to respond in faith to the gospel and make a personal commitment to live for Christ.⁷

³ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴ John Pollock, *The Billy Graham Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), p. 26.

⁵ Source: The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. See Profile of Billy Graham at www.billygraham.org/mediaRelations/bios.asp?p=1. Accessed August 28, 2006.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

This chapter will focus on the ministry and methods of Billy Graham, with particular emphasis on his ministry beginning with his watershed Los Angeles revival in 1949 through his historic New York City Crusade held at Madison Square Garden in 1957. While Graham's ministry has had a worldwide influence for a half century, this period between 1949 and 1957, including Los Angeles, New York, and his 1954 London Crusade, was a time of heightened spiritual interest and openness to the gospel in America and Great Britain which has perhaps not been equaled since.

Special attention will be given to four distinct strategic methods employed by Graham and his team in carrying out their ministry of crusade evangelism: *organized prayer support, the invitation to respond to the gospel preached by Billy Graham, a program to encourage believers to invite unbelieving friends called "Operation Andrew," and a commitment to cooperative evangelism.*

William Franklin Graham, Jr., the eldest child of Frank and Morrow Graham, was born on November 7, 1918, four days before the Armistice that ended World War I. Raised on a dairy farm near Charlotte, North Carolina, he was known to family and friends as "Billy Frank." As a teenager, his two primary interests were baseball and girls. Like countless other boys of his era, he dreamed of becoming a major league baseball player. After winning a speech contest in high school, the school principal told Billy, with his parents beaming: "Billy, you've got it in you to be a great orator." Underwhelmed by the compliment, Billy replied: "Thanks. I'd rather be a great first baseman."⁸

The turning point in his spiritual life occurred in the fall of 1934 when evangelist Mordecai Ham came to Charlotte for a series of revival meetings. One

⁸ Stanley High, *Billy Graham* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), p. 107.

evening, sometime around his sixteenth birthday, after listening to Ham night after night for several weeks, Billy Frank Graham went forward in response to Ham's invitation to accept Christ as Savior and Lord of his life. As he stood in front of the platform, a tailor named J.D. Prevatt, a friend of the Graham family, stepped up beside him and urged him to make his decision for Christ. To insure Billy understood what he was doing, Prevatt explained God's plan of salvation in a simple way. In his autobiography, Graham writes: "My tailor friend helped me to understand what I had to do to become a genuine Christian. The key word was *do*. Those of us standing up front had to decide to *do* something about what we knew before it could take effect."⁹ He had heard the gospel message and had felt the inner compulsion to go forward. Now, he says, came the moment to commit himself to Christ. "Intellectually," he writes, "I accepted Christ to the extent that I acknowledged what I knew about Him to be true. That was mental assent. Emotionally, I felt that I wanted to love Him in return for His loving me. But the final issue was whether I would turn myself over to His rule in my life."¹⁰ It was then and there that Billy Graham made a real and personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

William Martin asserts that *decision* is the key word to use in reference to Graham's conversion, for it is the word Billy Graham himself has used in recounting his experience to many audiences: "I didn't have any tears, I didn't have any emotion, I didn't hear any thunder, there was no lightning. I saw a lady standing next to me and she had tears in her eyes, and I thought there was something wrong with me because I

⁹ Billy Graham, *Just As I Am* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 30.

¹⁰ Ibid.

didn't feel all worked up. But right there, I made my decision for Christ. It was as simple as that, and as conclusive.”¹¹

Following his high school graduation in 1936, Graham spent one semester at Bob Jones College (then located in Cleveland, Tennessee), but he chafed under the restrictive rules and regulations of the school. In January 1937 he transferred to Florida Bible Institute (now Trinity College of Florida). During this time in Florida, Billy Graham has said: “I had one passion, and that was to win souls. I didn't have a passion to be a great preacher; I had a passion to win souls.”¹² It was a passion he would never lose. Ordained by a Southern Baptist church in 1939, Graham graduated from Florida Bible Institute in 1940 and then from Wheaton College (Illinois) in 1943 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology. In August 1943 he married Ruth McCue Bell, a fellow Wheaton student who had spent the first seventeen years of her life in China as the daughter of missionaries.

After graduating from Wheaton, Graham became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Western Springs, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. With remarkable seeker-sensitivity, a full generation before it became a popular movement among churches, Graham persuaded the deacons to change the church's name from Western Springs Baptist Church to the more generic and inclusive Village Church of Western Springs. During his eighteen months at the Village Church, Graham teamed with singer George Beverly Shea to broadcast a Sunday night program on Chicago's powerful radio station WCFL.

¹¹ Martin, p. 64.

¹² Pollock, p. 26.

Graham left the Village Church, the only church he would ever pastor, to join Youth for Christ International, established in 1945 to minister to youth and servicemen. As the organization's first official field representative, Billy Graham traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe in the years immediately following the end of World War II. In 1945, in fact, Graham received United Airlines' designation as its top civilian passenger.¹³ With their Youth for Christ motto of "Geared to the Times, Anchored to the Rock," Graham and his colleagues, including Torrey Johnson and Chuck Templeton, made every effort to be on the cutting edge of cultural relevancy in terms of the methods they employed in their ministry. But they were "anchored" to the message of the Bible so that while their methods might change, their message would not. As Billy Graham observed, "We used every modern means to catch the attention of the unconverted – and then we punched them right between the eyes with the gospel."¹⁴

In addition to his evangelistic work with Youth for Christ, Graham became President of the Northwestern Schools in Minneapolis, Minnesota, beginning in 1947, a post he would hold until 1952. The Northwestern Schools consisted of three institutions, a liberal arts college, a Bible college, and a theological seminary. At the time he became President of Northwestern, Graham was the youngest college president in America.

While Billy Graham and his evangelistic team had been holding city-wide evangelistic campaigns since 1947, it was the 1949 Los Angeles Campaign (the Graham team did not begin using the term "Crusade" until 1950) that catapulted Billy

¹³ Martin, p. 92.

¹⁴ Quoted in Martin, p. 93.

Graham into the public eye and made him a nationally-known figure. Originally scheduled to last three weeks, the Los Angeles Campaign was extended to eight weeks, with overflow crowds filling the “Canvas Cathedral” each night, as the tent erected at the corner of Washington and Hill Streets in downtown Los Angeles was known. The crowds grew so large that even with the tent expanded to seat 9,000, it was sometimes full hours before the service began, causing thousands of latecomers to listen from the periphery. This created such a major traffic problem that police eventually chose to close off a street rather than try to keep it clear.¹⁵ The total attendance in the eight weeks of the campaign was nearly 350,000, with approximately 3,000 inquirers responding to Billy Graham’s invitations.¹⁶

The high-profile conversions of Hollywood actor and popular radio host Stuart Hamblen, convicted wiretapper Jim Vaus, and 1936 Olympic champion Louis Zamperini during the campaign intensified the public interest in Graham and the revival meetings. So, too, did some help from an unlikely source: newspaper publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst. At a point during the fourth week of the campaign when Graham and his team were trying to decide if they should extend the campaign a second time (having already extended it after the third week following Hamblen’s conversion), they put out a fleece again, as Gideon had done in the Bible,¹⁷ seeking a clear sign from God to guide their decision. The sign came in the form of an unexpected swarm of newspaper reporters and photographers who showed up at the Canvas Cathedral at the very next service. When Billy Graham asked one of the reporters what was going on, he was told: “You’ve just been kissed by William

¹⁵ Martin, p. 118.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁷ See Judges 6.

Randolph Hearst.”¹⁸ Hearst had apparently given his famous order to “puff Graham.” The next day, the two Los Angeles newspapers, the *Examiner* and the *Herald Express*, both owned by Hearst, carried headline stories about the campaign. The story was picked up by Hearst newspapers across the country and then by the Associated Press. Soon Graham and the Los Angeles Campaign were receiving coverage in national magazines such as *Time* and *Life*. Graham and his team had received the sign from God for which they had prayed.

Concerning the media coverage of the campaign spurred by the Hearst-owned newspapers, Graham has written:

The newspaper coverage was just the beginning of a phenomenon. As more and more extraordinary conversion stories caught the public’s attention, the meetings continued night after night, drawing overflow crowds. Something was happening that all the media coverage in the world could not explain. And neither could I. God may have used Mr. Hearst to promote the meetings, as Ruth has said, but the credit belonged solely to God. All I knew was that before it was over, we were on a journey from which there would be no looking back.¹⁹

As the Los Angeles Campaign stretched on from three weeks to eight, Graham found himself stretched. Having run out of his own, he had to call on friends for sermon ideas and outlines. On one occasion, he resorted to reading Jonathan Edwards’ classic sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” word for word except for a few minor alterations. Out of illustrations, he became more and more dependent on the use of Scripture, a technique which he felt improved his sermons.²⁰ There were a few evenings when Billy Graham did not preach at all. New believers were invited to give their testimonies, and Graham felt that the Holy Spirit was

¹⁸ Graham, p. 149.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 150.

²⁰ Martin, p. 118.

speaking so powerfully through them that, instead of a full sermon, he simply gave a brief explanation of the gospel followed by an invitation to receive Christ.²¹

By the time the campaign ended in November, some church leaders were calling it “the greatest religious revival in the history of Southern California.”²² Whether true or not, there is no doubt that it was a defining moment in the ministry of the young evangelist from North Carolina. In the aftermath of the Los Angeles Campaign, Billy Graham would come to understand that what had taken place in the Canvas Cathedral at Washington and Hill Streets would change the face of his ministry and his life forever. “Overnight,” he says, “we had gone from being a little evangelistic team, whose speaker also served with Youth for Christ and Northwestern Schools, to what appeared to many to be the hope for national and international revival. Everywhere we turned, someone wanted us to come and do for them what had been done in Los Angeles. What they didn’t know, however, was that *we* had not done it....Whatever this could be called and whatever it would become, it was *God’s* doing.”²³

Now a nationally-known evangelist at the age of thirty-one, Graham followed up the Los Angeles Campaign with a remarkable campaign in Boston, which began on New Year’s Eve, December 31, 1949. Despite Graham’s success in Los Angeles, expectations in Boston remained surprisingly modest, and publicity was scarce.²⁴ The response, however, was extraordinary. In the seventeen days of the Boston Campaign, from December 31 to January 16, more than 110,000 people attended the meetings and some three thousand responded to Graham’s invitation to commit their lives to

²¹ Graham, p. 154.

²² Ibid., p. 151.

²³ Ibid., p. 158.

²⁴ Garth Rosell, “The Boston Revival of 1950,” in *The Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary CONTACT*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Fall 1999, pp. 15, 18.

Jesus Christ.²⁵ William Martin notes that though Graham believed God had been at work in Los Angeles, he also knew that significant contributions had been made on the human side as well. Months of preparation, thousands of dollars spent on promotion, and a windfall of publicity had all played a part in the campaign's success. But in Boston, with little or no preparation or publicity, the response was similar. This, says Martin, both exhilarated and terrified Graham.²⁶ Keenly aware of the danger of spiritual pride, he asked Harold John Ockenga, the influential pastor of Boston's Park Street Church, who had invited him to Boston, and Allan Emery, the chairman of the campaign, to pray "that the Lord will keep reminding me of the fact that this is all of grace and to Him is all the glory, because I realize if I take the smallest credit for anything that has happened so far, that my lips will turn to clay."²⁷ At the closing service held in the Boston Garden on January 16, Graham told the crowd of 16,000: "Not in my generation has there been such a moving of God's Spirit." This "is not the doing of any preacher," he said, and it is certainly "not the doing of Billy Graham." Rather, he said, it is "the miracle that God Himself has done to bring to New England the chance for full salvation."²⁸

Graham would return to New England in the spring of 1950 for a five-week crusade which would take him to more than twenty cities in all six New England states, culminating in an historic rally which drew 40,000 people to hear him preach on the Boston Common on April 23, 1950. In addition to his ministry in New England, Graham and his team would hold crusades in Columbia, South Carolina

²⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁶ Martin, p. 124.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Rosell, p. 21.

(where the term “crusade” was first used by the Graham organization); Portland, Oregon; Minneapolis; and Atlanta.

Already, in 1950, the platform team was in place which would remain intact for more than thirty-five years, until the death of Grady Wilson in 1987: Graham, Cliff Barrows, George Beverly Shea, Tedd Smith, and Wilson. This remarkable record of continuity and the depth of unity born of mutual affection and respect among the Graham team undoubtedly contributed significantly to its success in ministry. To handle the ministry’s finances, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was incorporated in 1950 with the stated purpose “to spread and propagate the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ by any and all...means,”²⁹ and Billy Graham’s national weekly radio broadcast, *The Hour of Decision*, debuted on the ABC radio network in November 1950.

In less than a year, as William Martin observes, “Graham had made astonishing strides...emerging from relative obscurity to become the best-known evangelist of his generation. He scored resounding triumphs in settings as strikingly different as Los Angeles, New England, and Bible-belted South Carolina. And he assembled a team of colleagues who, when it came to evangelistic campaigns, not only knew exactly what they wanted to do and how to do it but were rapidly gaining the confidence to insist it be done their way.”³⁰ Not only this, says Martin, but revivalistic Christianity was enjoying a popularity in the post-war years it had not experienced since the 1830s, and not since Charles Finney had an evangelical preacher been so in tune in the mood

²⁹ Graham, p. 182.

³⁰ Martin, p. 133.

of the nation and so ready to become the symbol of one of its most vital religious traditions as was Billy Graham in the early 1950s.³¹

If it was through the 1949 Los Angeles Campaign that Billy Graham rose to national prominence, it was his 1954 London Crusade that made him an internationally renowned figure. So significant was it in the way it defied expectations, triumphed over skepticism and opposition, and captured the attention of the English-speaking world, especially in the British Empire, that Martin says no crusade looms larger in the collective memory and mythos of the Graham organization than this twelve-week campaign at London's 12,000-seat Harringay Arena.³² Not since the days of Dwight L. Moody in the nineteenth century, or the time of John Wesley and George Whitefield in the eighteenth century, had England encountered an evangelist like Billy Graham.

What happened at Harringay in 1954 has been called the most remarkable religious revival in modern British history.³³ More than two million people attended the crusade meetings, with more than 36,000 indicating a personal response to the gospel. Not only did the London Crusade give Billy Graham international stature, as Stanley High observes, but for the first time, his preaching stirred an entire nation.³⁴

There were, however, serious obstacles and significant resistance to overcome if the London Crusade were to be successful. The first major challenge Graham faced, immediately upon his arrival in England, was opposition from the skeptical, even hostile, British press. There was also resistance from the churches. Keith Hardman

³¹ Ibid., p. 142.

³² Ibid., p. 173.

³³ Ibid., p. 178.

³⁴ High, p. 169.

points out that while the United States was experiencing a renewal of spiritual vitality in the 1950s, religious life in Britain was at its nadir. With church membership in the United States over sixty percent and increasing, in Britain it was only five to fifteen percent, and church attendance was even lower. Most of the churches in Britain were apathetic toward “revivalism,” especially its American version.³⁵

There was opposition, as well, based on theological concerns. Some Calvinists objected to Graham’s use of the invitation, arguing that salvation, because it is wholly the work of God, is not something individuals can choose to accept or reject. In addition, many fundamentalists saw Graham’s willingness to associate and cooperate with Anglicans and others they considered theologically defective a fatal flaw and felt it necessary to shun him. A lingering streak of anti-Americanism and objection to what many viewed as “hot-gospel,” high-pressure salesmanship also fueled the resistance.³⁶

All this opposition notwithstanding, Billy Graham did not allow it to deter him from the purpose for which he had come to London. At a press conference shortly after his arrival he made his purpose clear: “I have come to preach Christ. You may ask me, ‘Do you feel this is a message we need in Britain?’ I should answer that it is the message the whole world needs....I am calling for a revival that will cause men and women to return to their offices and shops to live out the teaching of Christ in their daily relationships. I am going to preach a gospel not of despair but of hope – hope for the individual, for society, and for the world.”³⁷ With disarming humility he told the press: “We have not come here to save you. We have not come here to reform

³⁵ Keith J. Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), pp. 258-259.

³⁶ Martin, p. 174.

³⁷ Graham, p. 219.

you. We have come at the invitation of the churches of London to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to the people of Britain.”³⁸

For twelve weeks Billy Graham preached the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, and the people of Britain responded in a remarkable way. Graham recalls: “As the Crusade gained momentum, I found myself becoming more and more dependent on God. I knew that all we had seen happening in Britain was the work of God. If we got in the way or began to take credit for what was happening, God’s blessing would be withdrawn. I knew it was also due to the work of the many dedicated people on our Team. I was merely the preacher, the messenger. None of what was happening could have happened apart from God and all the help we had.”³⁹

More than 100,000 people attended the closing service of the Crusade at Wembley Stadium. In his final message Billy Graham said to the assembled crowd: “You can go back to the shop, the office, the factory, with a greater joy and peace than you have ever known. But before that can happen you must commit yourselves to Jesus Christ. You must make your personal decision for him. And you can do that now. Choose this day whom ye will serve!”⁴⁰

Reflecting on the 1954 London Crusade, Graham says he believes its impact was four-fold: First and foremost, thousands of lives were touched with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. Second, he says he and his team left London confident that the churches there had been strengthened by the influx of new converts, as well as by the opportunity to participate in what God was doing in their city and to catch a new vision of God’s will for them. Third, the London Crusade gave the Billy

³⁸ Sherwood Eliot Wirt, *Billy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), p. 46.

³⁹ Graham, p. 225.

⁴⁰ Pollock, p. 72.

Graham Team a greater vision of what God could do in a major city through crusade evangelism. Fourth, though its impact would not be realized immediately, the 1954 London Crusade marked a decisive watershed for Billy Graham's ministry internationally.⁴¹ In the following years, he would take the gospel beyond the English-speaking world to the countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, as well as Australia and North America.

According to British theologian J.I. Packer, there is at least one other lasting impact of Graham's 1954 London Crusade. Packer estimates that sixty years ago, only five percent of British clergy could be considered theologically conservative and evangelical. By 2004, Packer says, more than thirty percent of clergy in the Church of England were some type of evangelical, a change that Packer attributes to Billy Graham's impact in 1954.⁴²

Graham followed up the London Crusade with a tour of Europe which saw him preach in Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Helsinki, Paris, and Stockholm. He returned to Europe again in 1955 with a six-week crusade in Glasgow, Scotland, and preached in several other cities in Europe as well. In 1956 he took the Gospel to India and several other Asian nations.

In 1957 Billy Graham undertook his most ambitious evangelistic crusade ever, a sixteen-week marathon in New York City to be held in the heart of Manhattan, in the famed Madison Square Garden. In Graham's estimation, "No other city in America – perhaps in the world – presented as great a challenge to evangelism."⁴³ New York's

⁴¹ Graham, pp. 237-238.

⁴² Cited by Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), p. 241.

⁴³ Graham, p. 298.

tremendous diversity was one reason it presented such a challenge. Graham noted there were some sixty major ethnic groups in the city's population. New York had more Italians than Rome, more Irish than Dublin, more Germans than Berlin, more Puerto Ricans than San Juan. At least ten percent of the world's Jewish population lived there. Protestants were a distinct minority, accounting for only 7.5 percent of the population. Many of them were only nominally committed to the Christian faith. According to research done prior to the 1957 Crusade, some fifty-eight percent of New Yorkers claimed no religious identity at all.⁴⁴ Because of its strategic influence on the worlds of business and finance, entertainment and communications, and international politics (with the United Nations headquartered in New York), Billy Graham believed that if New York could be reached with the gospel, it could have a profound impact on many other places.⁴⁵

As was the case in London in 1954, Graham faced stiff opposition in New York, from both the right and left sides of the theological spectrum. On the one hand, as the Crusade approached, the liberal mainline Protestant magazine *The Christian Century* complained that "the Graham procedure...does its mechanical best to 'succeed' whether or not the Holy Spirit is in attendance. At this strange new juncture of Madison Avenue and Bible Belt, the Holy Spirit is not overworked; he is overlooked."⁴⁶ *The Christian Century* also offered this critique: "The Billy Graham campaign will spin along to its own kind of triumph because canny experienced engineers of human decision have laid the tracks, contracted for the passengers, and will now direct the traffic which arrives on schedule.... Anticipation had been

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Pollock, p. 88.

adroitly created and built up by old hands at the business, and an audience gladly captive to its own sensations is straining for the grand entrance.”⁴⁷ While giving a back-handed compliment to the Graham team for their organizational skills and expertise, the editors of *The Christian Century* apparently dismissed the possibility that God might be at work through the ministry and methods of Billy Graham, and insulted the multitudes of people who were hungry for the gospel message preached by Billy Graham and for a vital relationship with God.

One of Graham’s chief public critics was the eminent and influential theologian at New York’s Union Theological Seminary, Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr, as Andrew Finstuen points out, had little patience for what he termed Graham’s “pietistic individualism,” which saw individual regeneration as the solution to the world’s problems.⁴⁸ Niebuhr alternately praised and criticized Graham’s view of social problems and his record on race, and was harshly critical of the highly “stylized, factory-like methods”⁴⁹ employed by the Graham team for facilitating conversions. While Graham sought a personal meeting with Niebuhr to seek a greater mutual understanding, Niebuhr steadfastly refused to meet with Graham. Responding publicly to Niebuhr’s criticism of his preaching for personal conversion in a *Saturday Evening Post* article published on April 13, 1957, Graham said: “I disagree with Dr. Niebuhr in one respect. I don’t think you can change the world with all its lusts and

⁴⁷ Quoted in Martin, p. 227.

⁴⁸ Andrew S. Finstuen, “The Prophet and the Evangelist: The Public ‘Conversation’ of Reinhold Niebuhr and Billy Graham,” *Books and Culture: A Christian Review*. July/August 2006. Available online at www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2006/004/3.8.html. Accessed August 17, 2006.

⁴⁹ I am using Finstuen’s words here. See *ibid*.

hatred and greed, until you change men's hearts. Men must love God before they can truly love their neighbors. The theologians don't seem to understand that fact."⁵⁰

On the other hand, Graham encountered harsh opposition from some of America's leading fundamentalists, including Bob Jones, Carl McIntire, and John R. Rice. Their criticisms hurt Graham deeply, and he was saddened by their harshness and lack of love. The heart of the problem for these men lay in the sponsorship of the Crusade by the Protestant Council of New York. They argued that the Council included many churches and clergy who were theologically liberal and who did not hold to some of the essentials of the Christian message. It was not the first time some of them had raised objections to Graham's growing ecumenism, but the New York Crusade marked their final break with Billy Graham and his work.⁵¹

Graham had earlier determined that the appropriate response to the attacks from his fundamentalist critics was to ignore them, so that nothing would deflect him from his primary purpose. As he wrote to Carl McIntire in 1955: "My objective is to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ by the preaching of His Word to sinners."⁵² Over against his fundamentalist critics, who felt he was compromising his witness by associating with those outside the fundamentalist camp, Billy Graham said: "My own position was that we should be willing to work with all who were willing to work with us. Our message was clear, and if someone with a radically different theological view somehow decided to join us in a Crusade that proclaimed Christ as the way to

⁵⁰ Quoted in Martin, pp. 228-229.

⁵¹ Graham, pp. 302-303.

⁵² Ibid., p. 303.

salvation, he or she was the one who was compromising personal convictions, not we.”⁵³

The New York City Crusade, originally scheduled for six weeks, was extended to sixteen weeks. It would be the longest and most intensive crusade Billy Graham ever held.⁵⁴ When it finally ended on Labor Day, September 2, the crusade had been the longest-running and highest-attended event in the history of Madison Square Garden. Including the crowds at outdoor rallies held on Wall Street, at Times Square and Yankee Stadium, total attendance was more than two million, with nearly 60,000 recorded decisions for Christ.⁵⁵

If the 1957 New York Crusade did not transform the city, it was not without significance. During the crusade, Graham racially integrated his team by bringing on Howard Jones, a young African-American pastor from Cleveland, as an associate evangelist. At the height of the crusade, in July, Graham invited civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. to join him on the platform at Madison Square Garden one evening and to lead the capacity crowd in prayer. In his introduction of King he said: “A great social revolution is going on in the United States today. Dr. King is one of its leaders, and we appreciate his taking time out of his busy schedule to come and share this service with us tonight.”⁵⁶ As William Martin observes, the implication was unmistakable for followers of Graham and King alike, and the significance enormous. Billy Graham was letting both whites and blacks know that he was willing

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 303-304.

⁵⁴ Billy Graham, *The Last Crusade* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2005), p. 26.

⁵⁵ Martin, p. 236.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 235.

to be identified with this social revolution that was taking place and its leader, and Martin Luther King was indicating to blacks that Billy Graham was their ally.⁵⁷

Ethel Waters, the famed African-American actress and singer, joined the crusade choir of 1,500 voices in order to be assured of a reserved seat, and sang each night for eight weeks. When Cliff Barrows learned of her presence in the choir, he asked if she would sing a solo. On five nights in the final eight weeks of the crusade, she sang the song she had made famous on Broadway: "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." She would become a regular guest at Billy Graham crusades for years to come, until her death in 1977.

In terms of the crusade's impact on New York, Dan Potter, the Executive Secretary of the Protestant Council of New York, wrote to Billy Graham six months after the end of the New York Crusade and said that the four objectives of the crusade had been "met in a miraculous way: to win men to Christ; to make the city God-conscious; to strengthen the churches; to make the city conscious of moral, spiritual, and social responsibilities."⁵⁸

Thousands of lives were changed as men and women responded to the gospel message preached by Billy Graham. As John Pollock indicates, they represented a cross-section of society: "the socially prominent and the outcast, the rich and the poor, the illiterate who could not sign their own decision cards and the university professor; racial lines were freely crossed and Negroes and Puerto Ricans were among the large groups."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Pollock, p. 94.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

There was at least one other unanticipated impact of the New York Crusade. Through the medium of television, some ninety-six million people had seen at least one of the services broadcast from Madison Square Garden.⁶⁰ More than one and a half million letters had poured into Minneapolis as a result of the weekly telecasts from New York, and fully thirty thousand people indicated they had made decisions for Christ either during or after the broadcasts.⁶¹ The Graham team realized that God was opening the door to a new medium for the furtherance of the gospel,⁶² a medium they would use with considerable frequency, expertise, and success in the next four decades.

The 1957 New York Crusade took a toll on Billy Graham personally. By the time it was over he had lost thirty pounds.⁶³ The sixteen-week campaign left him physically exhausted. Graham has admitted that something went out of him in that New York Crusade, and he never fully recovered.⁶⁴ Never again would Graham and his team undertake a crusade as long and demanding as the historic crusade at Madison Square Garden in 1957.

Billy Graham continued to receive invitations to hold evangelistic crusades around the world. Increasingly, from the late 1950s on, he became the “evangelist to the world,” holding crusades in Australia, Africa, Europe, Asia, and South America, as well as the United States, Canada, and Mexico. During a five-day crusade in Seoul, South Korea, in 1973, Graham preached to a single gathering in excess of one million people, probably the largest public religious gathering in history. Graham even

⁶⁰ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 323.

⁶¹ Martin, p. 235. See also Pollock, pp. 92-93.

⁶² Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 323.

⁶³ Martin, p. 235.

⁶⁴ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 323.

managed to penetrate the Iron Curtain, preaching in such Communist nations as the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. Though it was not without considerable controversy in the United States, Graham was invited to Moscow in 1982 by the Soviet government and preached in two churches. In 1984 he returned for a twelve-day preaching tour at the invitation of the Russian Orthodox Church and the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

In addition to his crusade ministry, Billy Graham has had an enduring influence on evangelism worldwide through international conferences he and his organization have sponsored, including the 1966 Berlin Congress on World Evangelism, the 1974 Lausanne Congress in Switzerland, and the International Conferences for Itinerant Evangelists held in Amsterdam in 1983, 1986, and 2000.

It was Billy Graham's vision and leadership which led to the founding of both *Christianity Today* and *Decision* magazines, in 1956 and 1960 respectively. Among the books he has written are *Peace With God* (1953), *The Secret of Happiness* (1955), *World Aflame* (1965), *Angels: God's Secret Agents* (1975), *How to Be Born Again* (1977), *The Holy Spirit* (1978), *Approaching Hoofbeats* (1983), *A Biblical Standard for Evangelists* (1984), *Facing Death and the Life After* (1987), and his autobiography, *Just As I Am* (1997).

Graham has been a friend to every U.S. president from Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush and to many world leaders as well. In a sense, in his later years, he has served in the unofficial role of America's pastor, speaking at services following the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building in 1995 and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. Millions of Americans

have looked to Billy Graham as a man they can trust for a message of comfort and hope from God in a time of trouble and uncertainty. He has even been called “the Protestant pope.”⁶⁵

Undoubtedly Billy Graham will be remembered as the premier Christian evangelist of the twentieth century, an extraordinary man of vision and passion whom God has used in an extraordinary way not only as an evangelist who has preached the Gospel to more people in person than anyone else in history, but also as one of the key leaders in helping to shape and give direction to the evangelical movement in the second half of the twentieth century.

* * * *

Billy Graham is a figure of enormous importance not only because of his remarkable ministry and its impact on hundreds of thousands of lives over a period of nearly sixty years, but also because of lessons we can learn and insights we can glean from methods employed by Graham and his team in their ministry.

Since the late 1940s, Billy Graham has held evangelistic crusades in cities throughout the United States and around the world. A Billy Graham Crusade is defined by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association as “a concerted effort by Christians in a specified community or area to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the attention of every person in that community or area.”⁶⁶ The crusade model of revival for the church and evangelistic outreach developed and used by Graham for more than half a century has undergone changes over time. For example, while the 1949 Los Angeles Campaign was originally scheduled for three weeks and was eventually

⁶⁵ David Aikman, *Great Souls: Six Who Changed the Century* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), p. 4.

⁶⁶ www.billygraham.org/mediaRelations/crusadeFAQ.asp. Accessed August 30, 2005.

extended to more than eight weeks, while the 1954 London Crusade and the 1957 New York Crusade ran twelve and sixteen weeks respectively, in later years, most Billy Graham Crusades have been held for only a week or even less. One significant factor leading to this change was the tremendous physical and emotional drain on Graham caused by the extended crusades during the early years of his ministry.

Sterling Huston, Billy Graham's longtime Crusade Director, notes that crusade evangelism has two primary objectives: to evangelize the community and to strengthen the church.⁶⁷ The first objective is "to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, to invite men and women to commit their lives to Christ, and to relate those who respond to a local church for continuing spiritual nurture and discipleship."⁶⁸ Huston emphasizes that crusade evangelism utilizes many different methodologies, including person to person, small group, literature, radio, television, youth, music, and visitation evangelism. The use of these different methods begins well before the official crusade, and continues long after.⁶⁹

The second objective is to strengthen the local church in its vitality, witness, and discipleship through spiritual renewal and training. The training of church members, their involvement in a focused ministry of prayer, and an emphasis on personal witnessing will result in a renewed and motivated congregation, which not only helps to reach the objectives of the crusade but can make a lasting impact on its community.⁷⁰ Clearly, then, a Billy Graham Crusade has a well-defined two-pronged

⁶⁷ Sterling W. Huston, *The Billy Graham Crusade Handbook* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1983), pp. 23-24.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

purpose: to bring unbelievers to saving faith in Jesus Christ and to spark revival and spiritual renewal in the church.

To that end, Billy Graham and his organization have developed and refined a formula which has produced unprecedented results in the nearly sixty years since he began doing evangelistic campaigns in the late 1940s. Among the most significant of Graham's methods are:

- Organized Prayer Support
- The Invitation
- Operation Andrew
- Cooperative Evangelism

I. ORGANIZED PRAYER SUPPORT

Billy Graham believes there is an indissoluble connection between prayer and revival. He has written: "John Wesley prayed, and revival came to England, sparing that nation the horrors of the French Revolution. Jonathan Edwards prayed, (and) the revival spread throughout the colonies. History has changed time after time because of prayer. I tell you, history could be altered again if people went to their knees in believing prayer."⁷¹

Affirming with Frank Laubach that prayer is "the mightiest force in the world,"⁷² Graham made a strategic decision that organized prayer support should undergird his evangelistic campaigns. Beginning with a citywide campaign in Augusta, Georgia, in 1948, the Graham team stressed that "prayer was an indispensable element in preparation for a Campaign, and ... sought to organize in

⁷¹ Billy Graham, *Unto The Hills* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1996) p. 178. Quoted in Lewis Drummond, *The Evangelist* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2001), p. 150.

⁷² Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 155.

advance as much prayer as possible.”⁷³ In the sermon he preached at the opening of his Los Angeles Campaign in September of 1949, Graham said that revival never comes except in answer to prayer. Referring back to his campaign in Augusta, he said: “Before we ever arrived, there were thirteen thousand prayer meetings held in that city. God was moving before we got there, in answer to prayer.”⁷⁴

Billy Graham did not underestimate the power of prayer. He attributed the success of his landmark Los Angeles Campaign to the prayers of God’s people, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the power of God’s Word.⁷⁵ Under the leadership of Armin Gesswein and J. Edwin Orr, more than eight hundred small groups were organized throughout the Los Angeles area to pray for the campaign, beginning several months in advance. Several all-day prayer meetings were held prior to the start of the campaign. Around the clock prayer chains were organized. During the campaign itself, a number of all-night prayer meetings were held. Billy Graham recalls: “Faithfully, day after day, forty to fifty women prayed together on our behalf and then attended the meetings, sitting just in front of the platform each night with their faces full of expectant faith that God was about to work again.”⁷⁶ Prayer meetings took place each evening during the campaign, starting thirty minutes prior to the start of the service. Often there was standing room only in the prayer tent.⁷⁷ A

⁷³ Ibid., p. 125.

⁷⁴ Billy Graham, *Revival in Our Time: The Story of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Campaigns* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1950), p. 77.

⁷⁵ Mel Larson, “Tasting Revival,” in Billy Graham, *Revival in Our Time*, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 155.

⁷⁷ See Mel Larson, “Tasting Revival,” in Billy Graham, *Revival in Our Time*, pp. 17-18, and Martin, p. 113, for descriptions of the prayer ministry leading up to and during the Los Angeles Campaign.

grateful Billy Graham commented to the press after the close of the campaign: “Anyone could preach with that prayer support.”⁷⁸

When Graham went to London in 1954 for his twelve-week crusade at Haringay Arena, he considered prayer as the key instrument of assault on the spiritual vacuum he found in England.⁷⁹ The London Crusade was Graham’s best-organized evangelistic effort to date, but Billy Graham himself said: “All of our preparation, promotion, and programming, and even my preaching itself – necessary as those things were – were nothing compared with the prayer power around the world. We were engaged in a spiritual battle for Britain, and we needed intercession for divine intervention. Periodically during our Crusade, we scheduled all-night prayer meetings that lasted from 10:30 PM to 6:00 AM in venues all over the city.”⁸⁰ Prior to the start of the London Crusade, Graham had dispatched Millie Dienert to England to organize prayer groups to pray for the upcoming crusade.⁸¹ Five hundred prayer groups were organized to pray for the crusade’s success before it began.⁸² In a letter to her parents back in North Carolina during the London Crusade, Ruth Graham wrote: “Did I tell you that last night in one cold, unheated building eight hundred people prayed all night long for the meeting?”⁸³ In assessing the London Crusade, Paul Rees cited the power of prayer as one of the key factors contributing to its historic impact.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Quoted in Larson, “Tasting Revival,” in Graham, *Revival in Our Time*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ This is Martin’s description in *A Prophet with Honor*, p. 174.

⁸⁰ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 223.

⁸¹ Drummond, p. 133.

⁸² High, p. 227.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁸⁴ Graham, *Just As I Am*, pp. 234-235.

The same was true of Graham's All-Scotland Crusade in Glasgow in 1955. A total of 2,800 prayer groups and an army of 100,000 prayer partners were mobilized in Great Britain to pray for the Glasgow Crusade,⁸⁵ prompting Billy Graham to remark to group of Scottish pastors: "Glasgow is the most prayed for city in the history of the Christian church. It will not be a miracle if we have a revival. It will be a miracle if we don't."⁸⁶

Convinced of the integral connection between prayer and spiritual fruit in their ministry, Billy Graham and his team organized what William Martin describes as a "massive worldwide prayer effort" as they prepared for the 1957 New York City Crusade, with more than ten thousand prayer groups in at least seventy-five countries meeting daily to pray for the success of the crusade.⁸⁷ In New York itself, 150,000 people signed pledge cards promising to pray for Graham and the crusade.⁸⁸

Billy Graham and his team have placed such a strong emphasis on prayer in their ministry out of a recognition that revival is not brought about by human techniques. Nor is evangelism merely a human activity. Sterling Huston writes: "Effective Crusades are not built through persuasion or personality or promotion. Rather, they are built by depending on the Holy Spirit to do His lasting work.... (O)nly the Holy Spirit can convict of sin, call to repentance and faith, and convert the soul. If we could organize or persuade people into the Kingdom, we could also organize and persuade them out again. This kind of effective evangelism would merely be a human transaction. The work of wooing and winning people to Christ is a

⁸⁵ High, p. 227.

⁸⁶ Luis Palau, *Scottish Fires of Revival* (Cupertino, CA: D.I.M.E. Publishers, 1980), p. 88.

⁸⁷ Martin, p. 226.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

work that only the Holy Spirit can do.”⁸⁹ Huston points out that Billy Graham and his team do not bring with them a “kind of ‘self-contained blessing’ which can superimpose a successful Crusade on an area.” Reliance on human abilities and strategies, he stresses, will yield only human results.⁹⁰ This is why trust in God and reliance on the Holy Spirit are essential.

The blessing of God on Billy Graham’s crusades, says Huston, has come in response to “effectual fervent prayer” (James 5:16, King James Version). Emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism, he says that prayer must be the highest priority.⁹¹ Reflecting on the significance of the ministry of prayer in Billy Graham’s crusades in the early years of his ministry, Armin Gesswein, who helped organize the prayer ministry in Los Angeles in 1949, said: “Without doubt, this is the master secret behind the Graham Crusades through the years; there is no other way to account for such a massive work of God.”⁹²

The ministry of prayer – specifically, organized prayer support – has been a key ingredient in the strategy and methodology of Billy Graham and his team since the late 1940s. As noted earlier, Billy Graham attributed the success of his ministry to the blessing of God unleashed in response to the faithful prayers of many people.

The Amsterdam Declaration: A Charter for Evangelism in the 21st Century, adopted by an assembly of some ten thousand evangelists, theologians, mission strategists and church leaders from more than two hundred countries around the world who met in Amsterdam in the year 2000 at the invitation of Billy Graham to “listen,

⁸⁹ Huston, pp. 39-40.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Armin Gesswein, “Prayer and Evangelism,” in Sherwood Eliot Wirt, ed., *Evangelism: The Next Ten Years* (Waco, TX: Word, 1978), p. 104. Quoted in Huston, p. 40.

pray, worship and discern the wisdom of the Holy Spirit for the unfinished task of world evangelization,”⁹³ includes this statement on the relationship between prayer and evangelism:

God has given us the gift of prayer so that in his sovereignty he may respond in blessing and power to the cries of his children. Prayer is an essential means God has appointed for the awakening of the church and the carrying of the gospel throughout the world. From the first days of the New Testament church, God has used the fervent, persistent praying of his people to empower their witness in the Spirit, overcome opposition to the Lord’s work and open the minds and hearts of those who hear the message of Christ (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:23-30; 6:4; 12:5). At special times in the history of the church, revivals and spiritual breakthroughs have been preceded by the explicit agreement and union of God’s people in seasons of repentance, prayer and fasting. Today, as we seek to carry the gospel to unreached people groups in all the world, we need a deeper dependence upon God and a greater unity in prayer (Ephesians 6:18).

*We pledge ourselves to pray faithfully to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest field (Matthew 9:37-38). We also pray for all those engaged in world evangelization and to encourage the call to prayer in families, local churches, special assemblies, mission agencies and transdenominational ministries.*⁹⁴

Billy Graham was not content to rely on prayer alone as he and his team did the preparatory work and then conducted a crusade in a particular city. Prayer was not the only weapon in his arsenal. It was, however, the most powerful weapon at his disposal. He understood that when God’s people unite in believing, faithful prayer, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, “revivals and spiritual breakthroughs” may come. So he made prayer the highest priority in his crusade ministry in both principle and practice.

⁹³ From The Preamble of The Amsterdam Declaration. The Declaration is found in Drummond, pp. 241-256.

⁹⁴ “Prayer and Evangelism,” From The Amsterdam Declaration. Drummond, p. 248.

II. THE INVITATION

Although there have been minor changes over the years, the essential format of a Billy Graham Crusade service has remained remarkably consistent, with singing, prayer, the introduction of special guests, testimonies by celebrities such as Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, Johnny Cash or long-time Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry, a solo by George Beverly Shea and music by guest artists such as Ethel Waters, Larnelle Harris or Michael W. Smith. Billy Graham is most willing to use celebrities to draw crowds and to demonstrate that Christianity is not a dull and lifeless affair, as William Martin observes.⁹⁵ But the focal point of every service is clearly the message Graham preaches, which inexorably leads to an invitation to his hearers to respond to the gospel in a personal way.

“By its very nature,” Billy Graham has written, “the gospel of Jesus Christ demands decision on the part of its hearers.”⁹⁶ Convinced of the importance of giving his hearers an opportunity to respond to the message of the gospel, from the earliest days of his ministry Graham has concluded his sermons with an invitation to make a personal response to the gospel, usually involving coming forward to a designated place near the platform from which he has been speaking.

Here is a typical Billy Graham invitation from the 1950s: “You can go out of here tonight with such peace and assurance as you have never known....You say, ‘Billy that’s all well and good. I’ll think it over and I may come back, I’ll...’ Wait a minute. You can’t come to Christ any time you want to. You can only come when the

⁹⁵ Martin, p. 547.

⁹⁶ Billy Graham, foreword to R.T. Kendall, *Stand Up and Be Counted* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1984), p. 7.

Spirit of God is drawing and wooing you. I beg of you to come now, before it is too late....I am not going to press you to make a decision....This is not something between you and Billy Graham. This is between you and God. But you say, 'Billy, why must I get up in front of my friends, and come down these aisles?' It's true, coming down these aisles and standing here does not mean you are saved. But it is a seal upon your decision to accept Christ. And Jesus said that if we confess him before men he will confess us before his Father who is in heaven....If you have friends or relatives, they'll wait on you. Whether you are young or old, rich or poor, white or colored,⁹⁷ you know you need Christ in your life tonight. So now, while the choir sings softly, 'Just As I Am without One Plea,' you come and say, 'Billy, tonight I accept Jesus Christ.'"⁹⁸

Critics and supporters alike have noted that when Billy Graham gives an invitation at the end of his message, he does not attempt to play on the emotions of the people in his audience, as some evangelists have done. He does not badger or plead or cajole or argue, nor does he engage in melodramatic methods in an attempt to entice people to respond.⁹⁹

Early in his ministry Graham was more forceful and dramatic in giving the invitation. In Los Angeles in 1949, for example, as he gave the invitation one evening, he said: "There is a man in this audience who has heard this story many times before, and who knows this is the decision he should make. Yet again he is saying no to God. He is hardening his heart, stiffening his neck, and he is going out of this place without Christ. And yet this may be the last opportunity God will give him

⁹⁷ In the 1950s, "colored" was an accepted, non-pejorative term used to denote African-Americans.

⁹⁸ High, p. 67.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

to decide for Christ.” One man in that audience listening to Billy Graham was a convicted wiretapper named Jim Vaus, who worked for gangster Mickey Cohen. Graham’s words brought Vaus under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Graham continued: “The only time a man can decide for Christ is when the Holy Spirit has brought conviction to his heart. If God is bringing conviction to your heart, you dare not say no. This is your moment of decision.”

After a brief struggle of heart and mind, Jim Vaus muttered to himself: “I’ll go.” He hit the sawdust trail and headed to the front. That day he committed his life to Christ.¹⁰⁰

By the time of his 1954 London Crusade, it was more characteristic of Billy Graham to give a simple invitation at the conclusion of his message without histrionics. Stanley High describes it this way: “When...Billy Graham gives the invitation to ‘make a decision for Christ’...he does not move or gesture. He stands in one place behind the pulpit, his arms folded, his head slightly bowed, his chin cupped in one hand....He speaks quietly, soberly, without excitement or emotion.”¹⁰¹

John Pollock describes an invitation Graham gave at his 1963 Los Angeles Crusade, held at the Los Angeles Coliseum. More than 134,000 persons attended the final service, with an additional 20,000 outside the stadium. When Billy Graham came to the end of his gospel message, he said: “I’m going to ask you to do something tough and hard. I’m going to ask you to get up out of your seat, hundreds of you, get up out of your seat, and come out on this field and stand here reverently. Say tonight, ‘I do want Christ to forgive me; I want a new life; I want to live clean

¹⁰⁰ Drummond, p. 12; Pollock, pp. 48-49.

¹⁰¹ High, p. 90.

and wholesome for Christ; I want him to be my Lord and Master.’ God has spoken to you. You get up and come – we’re going to wait right now – quickly – hundreds of you – from everywhere.” And then, as Pollock says, not another word. Graham stood back, his arms folded, his head bent in prayer. As had been the case in Chicago and Sydney and many other cities around the world, it looked from the platform like a mass movement. But from different places in the stadium, it was one person here, another there, for each one a deliberate, personal decision to come down the aisle and onto the grass. Billy stood motionless throughout, a distant figure barely discernible above the sea of inquirers, young and old, waiting until the tide ceased to flow and he could speak to them briefly before giving the benediction and the counseling began.¹⁰²

Present at the 1963 Los Angeles Crusade one evening was German theologian Helmut Thielicke, who had come with a critical eye. But watching the invitation by Billy Graham and the response to it from the platform prompted this reaction from Thielicke: “(I) saw it all happen without pressure and emotionalism (contrary to the reports I had received up until now).... I saw them all coming towards us, I saw their assembled, moved and honestly decided faces, I saw their searching and their meditateness. I confess that this moved me to the very limits. Above all there were two young men – a white and a black – who stood at the front and about whom one felt they were standing at that moment on Mount Horeb and looking from afar into a land they had longed for. I shall never forget those faces. It became lightning clear that men *want* to make a decision.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Pollock, pp. 118-119.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 119.

When inquirers¹⁰⁴ come forward in response to an invitation by Billy Graham, Graham's usual message to them is like this, from his 1986 Washington, D.C. Crusade: "You have not come to Billy Graham. I have no special powers. I'm just another human being like you. I'm just the messenger. The message comes from God. You have asked for his forgiveness. I want to tell you on the authority of Scripture that he will give you that forgiveness. Not because you deserve it, but because Christ died for you. And he rose again, and he's alive, and he's willing to come into your heart now by the Holy Spirit and give you a new power, a new strength, and new joy, and a new peace." Then, as has been his custom for decades, he led the inquirers in a prayer of confession of sin and trust in Christ.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, Billy Graham has never considered himself to be a great preacher. With respect to his preaching, he has said: "I have found that when I present the simple message of the gospel of Jesus Christ with authority and simplicity, quoting the word of God, he takes that message and drives it supernaturally into the human heart. It is a supernatural message, a supernatural authority, a supernatural power, by the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁶

When asked if he had some special gift which could account for the extraordinary results of his ministry, Graham did not point to his preaching ability but referred instead to the invitation he gives at the conclusion of each gospel message: "I believe there is a gift God has given me in asking people to come forward to make a

¹⁰⁴ Billy Graham and his ministry team prefer to call those who come forward at Crusade services "inquirers" rather than "converts," since as Billy Graham said early in his ministry: "Only God knows when or if a man is truly converted. Many come forward in our meetings who are seekers but not finders." Quoted in Martin, p. 550.

¹⁰⁵ Martin, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁶ Billy Graham, "Ambassadors," *Decision*, May 1977, p. 26. Quoted in Drummond, p. 113.

commitment to Christ at the end of my sermons. And in the five or ten minutes that this appeal lasts, when I'm standing there, not saying a word, it's when most of my strength leaves me. I cannot explain that. I don't usually get tired quickly. But I get tired at the invitation. This is when I become exhausted. I don't know what it is, but something is going out of me at the moment."¹⁰⁷ In July 1949, even before his watershed Los Angeles Campaign, he said to his friend Roy Gustafson: "Roy, when I come to my invitation I sense God come on me, and I feel a power at that invitation's that's peculiar."¹⁰⁸ Given Graham's remarkable track record over nearly six decades and the response to his invitations by people from around the world, it is difficult to argue with his self-assessment. It is, indeed, a remarkable thing to see the significant numbers of people who respond, many of them instantly, when Billy Graham gives an invitation to receive Christ or to recommit one's life to Christ.

While the main emphasis in a Billy Graham crusade service has always been on the preaching of the gospel and the invitation to respond in faith, Graham himself has been mindful in his preaching that the response of the audience does not ultimately depend on him but on the work of the Holy Spirit. In his autobiography he writes: "From the moment I stand up to speak to a crowd, I am thinking about that person whose life is being crushed by heartache or alcohol or family problems, and I want to make the hope of the gospel as clear as possible to him or her. Sometimes I pick out someone in the audience who seems to be especially burdened and preach directly to that person. Preaching also involves us in a spiritual battle with the forces of evil. I

¹⁰⁷ Edward. B. Fiske, "The Closest Thing to a White House Chaplain," *The New York Times Magazine*, 8 June 1969, p. 116. Quoted in Janet Lowe, *Billy Graham Speaks: Insight from the World's Greatest Preacher* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1999), p. 69.

¹⁰⁸ Pollock, p. 43.

am always deeply conscious that I am absolutely helpless and that only the Holy Spirit can penetrate the hearts and minds of those who are without Christ. When I am speaking from the Bible, I know there is another voice speaking to the people, and that is the voice of the Holy Spirit. I am reminded often of Jesus' parable of the seed and the sower (see Mark 4:1-20), knowing that all I am doing is sowing seed. It is God – and only God – who can make that seed bear fruit.”¹⁰⁹

John Pollock points out that during his 1954 London Crusade at Harringay Arena, for example, Graham put less and less force into the invitation as the weeks went on. Graham said he felt like a spectator standing on the sidelines watching God at work, and he wanted to get out of the way as much as he could and let God take over.¹¹⁰

Billy Graham recognizes and affirms the sovereignty of God in salvation. In an interview with Lewis Drummond in 2000, Graham said: “I believe God has prepared the hearts of certain people in every audience I speak to. I never think about the results. I know there are people that God has prepared their hearts, and in that sense they are chosen by God. I have total relaxation, I just know that something is going to happen that God has planned.”¹¹¹

When one is confident of the sovereignty of God in salvation, it is easier to proclaim the gospel without worrying about results or attempting to manipulate people emotionally. Billy Graham has said: “When I stand up to preach, in one sense I am not primarily concerned – and this may sound irreverent – whether anybody responds or not. All I am is a mouthpiece giving God's message, and it is up to him to

¹⁰⁹ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 324.

¹¹⁰ Pollock, p. 69.

¹¹¹ Drummond, p. 53.

perform the work in the hearts of the people. If they reject him, it is their responsibility before God, not mine. And so I no longer carry that great load that was breaking me down physically.”¹¹²

Again, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation, Graham has said: “I don’t believe any man can come to Christ unless God has drawn him.”¹¹³ It is his unequivocal conviction that “salvation is of the Lord.”¹¹⁴

Yet he understands the sovereignty of God as seen in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation to be in tension with the responsibility of the individual to respond. While a person cannot come to faith in Jesus Christ unless the Spirit of God brings him or her, still the individual must respond and yield to the prompting and urging of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁵ Graham acknowledges the tension, even the paradox, of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation by appealing to the illustration of a person approaching the gate of salvation and seeing a sign on the threshold which says: “Whosoever will may come.” Eagerly the person enters and turns around to see another sign on the inside of the threshold that reads: “Chosen from the foundations of the world.”¹¹⁶

As William Martin observes, the bottom-line goal of every Billy Graham crusade is the number of people who respond to Graham’s invitation. Though he has had an unusual gift for the invitation since the early days of his ministry, some acknowledge that other factors contribute to his phenomenal success at “drawing in

¹¹² Billy Graham, “Billy Graham’s Own Story, God Is My Witness, Part I,” *McCall’s*, April 1964, p. 122. Quoted in Lowe, p. 122.

¹¹³ John Pollock, *Crusades: Twenty Years with Billy Graham* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1969, p. 276. Quoted in Drummond, p. 54.

¹¹⁴ John Pollock, *Billy Graham: The Authorized Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1966), p. 252. Quoted in Drummond, p. 54.

¹¹⁵ Graham, *Unto the Hills*, p. 401.

¹¹⁶ Drummond, p. 53.

the net.” Gavin Reid suggests that “Billy Graham gets good results because more uncommitted people come to his meetings than is true with other evangelists. He is a ‘name.’” Others give much credit to the “planting and cultivating that go on before the harvester hits town with his evangelistic combine.”¹¹⁷ One must also acknowledge the “priming the pump” influence which occurs when the invitation is given at every crusade service as hundreds of trained counselors instantly leave their seats and walk to the platform to be ready to meet, counsel and pray with inquirers who respond to the invitation. Seeing these men and women respond with a physical movement at the moment the invitation is given certainly removes a hindrance for some in the audience who may be self-consciously hesitant to come forward.

Billy Graham insists, though, that he is not ultimately concerned about the numbers of people who respond or about the staying power of those who come forward at his crusades: “I’m not the slightest bit concerned about it because I know the answer. I know that the parable of the sower...can be applied to every audience where the gospel is preached either by me or the simplest priest or clergyman in the world. There will be the person who will totally reject for ‘the seed falls on hard ground.’ There will be those where it will last maybe a month or two and fall by the wayside: ‘the thorns and thistles will choke it out and the cares of the world will come in.’ But then there’s the group where Jesus said, They will believe and they will bear fruit sixty-fold and hundred-fold.”¹¹⁸

Undoubtedly, the use of the invitation will be one of the greatest and most enduring legacies of the ministry of Billy Graham as a practicing evangelist.

¹¹⁷ Martin, p. 549.

¹¹⁸ Billy Graham, *U.S. Catholic*, March 1976, p. 41. Quoted in David Poling, *Why Billy Graham?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), p. 109.

Certainly his own experience as a sixteen-year-old boy, coming to faith under the revival ministry of Mordecai Ham, influenced his own ministry. Perhaps he was influenced as well, at least indirectly, by the experience of Dwight L. Moody, considered the greatest American evangelist of the last half of the nineteenth century. On the evening of October 8, 1871, Moody preached to a large crowd in Farwell Hall in Chicago on the text: “What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?” (Matthew 27:22, KJV). He told the audience to go home and think about the question, and then come back the following Sunday to decide what they would do with Jesus. That evening the great Chicago fire broke out, and Moody never saw that audience again. He considered his failure to call them to respond to the gospel that evening one of the biggest blunders of his life. In retrospect, he said: “I want to tell you of one lesson I learned that night: ...that is, when I preach, I press Christ upon the people then and there and try to bring them to a decision on the spot.”¹¹⁹

Like Moody, Billy Graham believed – and believes – in the importance of calling people to make a personal response to the gospel and not to put it off. In 1955, when Graham went to Scotland for a six-week crusade in Glasgow, many Scottish ministers and members of the Crusade executive committee advised Graham not to give an invitation for inquirers to come forward in response to his message, fearing a lack of response by the reserved Scots would have a negative impact on the crusade. Graham responded to the committee by asking: “Why bring a man up to the very door of heaven and then refuse him the opportunity to enter?”¹²⁰ Their fears proved

¹¹⁹ William R. Moody, *The Life of D.L. Moody* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 131. Quoted in Don Sweeting, “The Great Turning Point in the Life of D.L. Moody,” Timothy George, ed., *Mr. Moody and the Evangelical Tradition* (London: T & T Clark International Ltd, 2004), p. 47.

¹²⁰ Palau, pp. 86-87.

unwarranted as more than 25,000 people responded to Graham's invitations during the six weeks of the Glasgow Crusade.

At one of his final crusades, held in New York City in June 2005, Billy Graham, then 86 years old and in frail health, gave this invitation: "Since I've been in New York, there have been two helicopter crashes in the East River. I was reminded of a man who was on a small plane going from Nassau to Miami. It crashed in the ocean. He survived the crash, but had blood on his forehead which attracted the sharks, and he spent ten hours kicking at the sharks to survive. After he had been in the water more than ten hours, he saw an aircraft and waved his orange life vest. The pilot spotted him and dropped a smoke canister and radioed a Coast Guard cutter that was twelve minutes away. He said: 'Hurry! There's a man down there surrounded by sharks.' So the Coast Guard went there and found him and saved him. You know, he didn't need a new swimming technique, he needed outside intervention.

"And tonight, you need outside intervention – and that's what God will do for you. He'll bring a peace and a joy to your heart that you've never known. He'll fill the void that's in your heart. Some of you here tonight have been looking for something for years. Others of you are young. But no matter who you are, you are searching for peace and meaning and a purpose in life. What do you have to do? By faith open your heart to Christ and say, 'Lord Jesus, come into my heart' – and he will.

"I'm going to ask you to do that, as we've seen thousands of people do all over the world. I'm going to ask you to get up out of your seat and come and stand in front here, and before you go back, I'll say a word to you and have a prayer with

you....When you come, there will be counselors that have been trained to help you and answer your questions. Come now and give your life to Christ. God bless you.”¹²¹

After hundreds had come in response to his invitation, Billy Graham spoke to them briefly and then asked them to pray this prayer after him, out loud: “Oh God, I am a sinner. I am sorry for my sin. I now turn to Jesus for forgiveness, and I thank you for what you have done for me through him. I receive Jesus into my heart, and I want him to be the Lord of my life. I want to follow him in the fellowship of his church. Take charge of me, Lord. Help me in my problems. Lift the burdens of my heart. Make a new person out of me. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.”¹²²

While this New York Crusade was billed as Graham’s “last crusade,” he would preach at least once more, at a Festival of Evangelism with his son Franklin held in Baltimore, Maryland, in July 2006. What is significant to note is that from the time Billy Graham burst onto the national scene with his ground-breaking Los Angeles Campaign in 1949 (and even before) until his last crusade, the centerpiece of his ministry has always been the clear preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ which led unfailingly to an invitation to his hearers to respond and commit or recommit their lives in faith to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Though it cannot be stated with certainty, it is not only possible but likely that hundreds of thousands of Christian believers around the world trace their conversion directly to the ministry of Billy Graham.

¹²¹ Graham, *The Last Crusade*, pp. 57-59.

¹²² Ibid., pp. 62-63.

III. OPERATION ANDREW

A new strategic method was introduced and implemented by the Graham organization at the 1954 London Crusade which became a standard part of crusades to follow. This strategy was known as “Operation Andrew.” Its name came from the incident in the Gospel of John in which Andrew brought his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus (John 1:40-42).

The inspiration for Operation Andrew seems to have come from evangelist Stephen Olford, who was serving as pastor of the Duke Street Baptist Church in London at the time. As Martin indicates, Olford knew from his own experience that most people who attended evangelistic services were already affiliated with a church, and he was searching for ways to increase the proportion of the unchurched at such services, as well as to maintain a connection with them following the services. His solution, says Martin, was “biblical, elegantly simple, and remarkably effective.”¹²³ The Duke Street Church would provide free transportation and arrange for reserved seating for any church member who wished to attend the crusade. Tickets for the bus and crusade were free, but they came in groups of no less than two, and all church members who received a ticket for themselves were required to bring at least one unconverted person with them, whether a friend, co-worker, or family member. The idea, Martin notes, turned out to be a smashing success.¹²⁴ In a letter from London to her parents, Ruth Graham wrote: “One wonderful thing is the way Christians are bringing non-Christians (to the services). One man has started ‘Operation Andrew’ in

¹²³ Martin, p. 179.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

his community. They have brought, so far, close to three hundred unconverted friends to the services, of which 76 have been gloriously converted.”¹²⁵

There is some question as to whether Operation Andrew was entirely the vision and initiative of Stephen Olford, as he claimed. While some members of the Graham organization dispute Olford’s claim to sole credit, they do acknowledge it was a British invention, and they quickly adopted it as a standard part of their crusade strategy.¹²⁶

After its successful introduction in London, Operation Andrew was used effectively the following year in Glasgow, Scotland. As had been done in London, churches were encouraged to charter buses on which church members could travel only if they brought along an unchurched friend or family member. As Charlie Riggs, one of Billy Graham’s assistants, put it: “The idea was to go out after the uncommitted, the unchurched, and bring them in a group.”¹²⁷ Billy Graham himself noted that the Glasgow Crusade attracted large numbers of unchurched people, in part through the implementation of Operation Andrew.¹²⁸

So effective was Operation Andrew that it became an institutional part of almost every Billy Graham Crusade. In both *The Billy Graham Crusade Handbook* and *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church* by Sterling W. Huston,¹²⁹ Operation Andrew is included as one of the keys to effective crusade evangelism.¹³⁰ Billy

¹²⁵ High, p. 179.

¹²⁶ Martin, p. 179.

¹²⁷ Pollock, *The Billy Graham Story*, p. 80.

¹²⁸ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 250.

¹²⁹ Sterling W. Huston, *The Billy Graham Crusade Handbook*. (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1983). Sterling W. Huston, *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church*, revised and expanded edition (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1996).

¹³⁰ Huston, *The Billy Graham Crusade Handbook*, pp. 44-45; *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church*, pp. 50-53.

Graham and his organization recognize that evangelism, including mass evangelism or crusade evangelism, is not done in a vacuum. Huston is quick to point out that it is only as Christians sow the good seed of the gospel through their witness, and water it with their loving concern and prayers, that the harvest is prepared for the work of the evangelist. There can be no reaping where there has not first been sowing. Billy Graham has said that whenever there is a successful crusade, it is because there have been faithful Christians sowing and watering so that God can bring the increase.¹³¹

The Operation Andrew strategy is rooted in the principle that effective evangelism is built on relationships.¹³² According to Huston, surveys of crusade inquirers conducted six weeks after the crusade meetings ended have shown that at least 80 percent, and often up to 90 percent, of the unchurched individuals who responded to Billy Graham's invitation were brought personally by another person.¹³³ Operation Andrew is designed to help maximize this effect by encouraging believers to be intentional in praying for, inviting, and bringing their unchurched and unbelieving friends to a Billy Graham crusade. The Graham organization has developed an Operation Andrew card, which is distributed to believers up to three or four months in advance of a crusade. On one side of the card is a place for a Christian "Andrew" to list the names of up to seven persons who do not know Christ for whom the believer can pray regularly, with the intention of extending an invitation in the hope of bringing each of these unbelieving friends or family members to a crusade service.

¹³¹ Huston, *The Billy Graham Crusade Handbook*, p. 42.

¹³² Ibid., p. 43.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 44.

On the other side of the card, five specific action steps are laid out for the “Andrew” to take. First, there is the encouragement to “LOOK AROUND – because your mission field is right where you live, work, or go to school.” The Christian is then urged to list the names of seven individuals who need Christ on the reverse side of the card. Second, the “Andrew” is advised to “LOOK UP – for prayer changes people!” The believer is exhorted to set aside time each day to pray for these seven individuals, as well as for himself or herself, asking God to provide opportunities to share his love with them. Third, the “Andrew” is to “LOOK OUT – for ways to cultivate their friendship and earn their confidence.” This must be done with sincerity, of course, and with genuine concern for them as persons, not merely as potential spiritual trophies. The idea is to be intentional in pursuing relationships with unbelievers. Such things as an invitation to dinner or a sports event can do much to build bridges, opening the way to Christ. Fourth, there is the encouragement to “LOOK FORWARD – and, several weeks before the Crusade, begin to talk to each one about coming to the Crusade with you.” The reality is that few of them will go on their own. The “Andrew” is advised to have a definite date in mind, to pray, and then follow through with the invitation. Fifth, the “Andrew” is to “LOOK AFTER – those who responded to Christ.” They will need the support and encouragement of their believing friends as they begin the journey of Christian discipleship. Those who do not come to Christ in faith may be reached later on, so the “Andrew” is urged to continue to love them and pray for them.¹³⁴

Operation Andrew is a simple, proven, practical strategy which, when used by Christians to bring their unchurched friends or family members to a service where

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

they will hear the message of the gospel proclaimed in its simplicity and power, can be extraordinarily effective. The key is the network of relationships that Christians have with non-Christians and the willingness of Christians to invite and bring the non-Christians in their sphere of influence to a service where they will hear the gospel.

As a method, Operation Andrew can only be as effective as those who employ it make it. The Billy Graham organization cannot make it effective in any crusade setting. Its effectiveness is dependent on its actual use by the “Andrews” in any community. It will not work if the Christians do not pray for, invite, and bring their non-Christian friends to the crusade or other outreach events. But if they do, the results may be remarkable, as they have been in the past.

IV. COOPERATIVE EVANGELISM

It is astonishing to consider that Billy Graham’s long and influential career in crusade evangelism almost ended before it began. In June 1949, three months before the beginning of the 1949 Los Angeles Campaign which was a defining moment in his ministry and made him a nationally known figure, Graham conducted a two-week campaign in Altoona, Pennsylvania. It was, according to Grady Wilson, “the sorriest crusade we ever had,” adding that “Billy was about ready to give up the ministry after Altoona.”¹³⁵ So discouraging was the experience in Altoona that, says Graham: “I pondered whether God had really called me to evangelism after all.”¹³⁶

There were several factors which contributed to the discouragement in Altoona, but perhaps chief among them was the lack of cooperation among the Christian

¹³⁵ Martin, p. 108.

¹³⁶ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 134.

community there. Graham had received several invitations to conduct a campaign in Altoona, but it was not until he arrived in town that he learned these had not been repeated requests from a single body, but separate invitations from rival ministerial associations which did not get along with each other and were not about to cooperate in a campaign.¹³⁷ He discovered Altoona to be a center of extreme fundamentalism (as well as strong liberalism), and the meetings were disrupted by people yelling out, not in a spirit of enthusiasm, but to condemn Graham for associating with Christians they considered too liberal.¹³⁸ For Graham and the members of his team, it was the nadir of their careers in ministry.¹³⁹

From very early in his ministry, Billy Graham was committed to the principle of cooperative evangelism. In Augusta, Georgia, in 1948, for example, the citywide campaign was sponsored by the city's ministerial association. Such extensive sponsorship, Graham says, had never happened before. In all previous cities, he and his team had been invited by a few churches, or in some cases only one church, to hold a campaign. In Augusta they worked to receive as broad church involvement as possible, and received support from virtually the entire Christian community.¹⁴⁰

Later that year, in formulating what came to be known as the Modesto Manifesto, Billy Graham and his team committed themselves to cooperating with all who would cooperate with them in the public proclamation of the gospel, and to avoid a spirit of criticism toward the local church or its clergy.¹⁴¹ This commitment to cooperation in the work of evangelism would both win Graham some unlikely friends

¹³⁷ Martin, p. 108.

¹³⁸ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 134.

¹³⁹ Martin, p. 108.

¹⁴⁰ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 125.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 128 -129.

over the years and cost him some dear friends, as former fundamentalist allies would part ways with him over his willingness to associate with more liberal Christians in order to reach more people with the gospel.

Graham demonstrated his commitment to cooperative evangelism in the defining campaigns or crusades of his ministry – in Los Angeles in 1949, in London in 1954, and in New York in 1957. The invitation to hold a campaign in Los Angeles came originally from a group of businessmen calling itself “Christ for Greater Los Angeles.” Though they represented about two hundred churches, Graham insisted that they try to broaden church support to include as many churches and denominations as possible. He was convinced that “(t)he city of Los Angeles will not be touched unless the majority of the churches are actively back of this campaign.”¹⁴² Support from the churches did grow significantly. By the end of the eight-week campaign, nearly seven hundred churches were supporting the campaign to one degree or another.¹⁴³

In an address to more than 750 British clergymen in 1952, Billy Graham talked openly about his ministry and its guiding principles, emphasizing, among other things, his organization’s commitment to work with the churches and not apart from them.¹⁴⁴ This address was a precursor to the invitation he would receive to hold a crusade in London in 1954.

Graham’s determination to work with those who were willing to work with him, even if they were not theologically aligned on all matters of the faith, raised the ire of fundamentalist champions such as Carl McIntire, Bob Jones, Sr., and John R. Rice. McIntire, who, in Martin’s words, “had never cooperated with any person or

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 143-144.

¹⁴³ Martin, p. 120.

¹⁴⁴ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 209.

organization he could not control,”¹⁴⁵ opposed Graham because of his connections with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), which McIntire considered little better than the liberal National Council of Churches. Martin indicates that McIntire also resented Graham’s personal friendship with Harold John Ockenga, the influential pastor of Boston’s Park Street Church, and the first president of both Fuller Theological Seminary and the NAE, whom McIntire saw as his chief rival within conservative circles.¹⁴⁶

Though Bob Jones had told young Billy Graham in 1936 that he would never amount to anything if he left Bob Jones College, the two men had maintained a cordial relationship while Graham was with Youth for Christ and at the Northwestern Schools. But when Jones withdrew from the NAE over what he considered its excessive ecumenism, he became openly critical of Graham, accusing him of preaching a “discount type of religion” and “sacrificing the cause of evangelism on the altar of temporary convenience.”¹⁴⁷ Whether there was substance in Jones’ criticisms of Graham or not, Martin suggests that jealousy over Graham’s sensational success and transcendent fame may have been the cause of the final breach between the two men.¹⁴⁸

John R. Rice, publisher of the popular and influential fundamentalist journal *Sword of the Lord*, supported Billy Graham as long as he felt he could, even after Graham endorsed the new Revised Standard Version of the Bible, published in 1952 by the liberal National Council of Churches, and after Graham began accepting

¹⁴⁵ Martin, p. 218.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 219.

invitations to speak at liberal seminaries. The breaking point came when Graham accepted an invitation from the Protestant Council of the City of New York, an organization representing some 1,700 churches in the New York metropolitan area, to hold a crusade in Madison Square Garden in the late spring of 1957. This was too much for Rice and the other fundamentalist standard-bearers to stomach. Because the Protestant Council was affiliated with the National Council of Churches, it was painfully clear to Rice, as to the others, that, in their view, Billy Graham had moved into the liberal camp.

Graham acknowledges that the opposition he received from these fundamentalist leaders was personally painful. In his autobiography he writes: “Most of them I knew personally, and even if I did not agree with them on every detail, I greatly admired them and respected their commitment to Christ. Many also had been among our strongest supporters in the early years of our public ministry. Their criticisms hurt immensely, nor could I shrug them off as the objections of people who rejected the basic tenets of the Christian faith or who opposed evangelism of any type. Their harshness and their lack of love saddened me and struck me as being far from the spirit of Christ.”¹⁴⁹

The problem, as the fundamentalist leaders saw it, was that the Protestant Council of New York was largely composed of churches and clergy who were theologically liberal and who denied some of the basic tenets – some of the fundamental truths – of the Christian faith. They found it unconscionable for Billy Graham or any true Bible-believing Christian to join in common cause with such heretics. Graham said: “I studied and prayed over their criticisms, wanting to accept

¹⁴⁹ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 302.

their indictments if they were right. But I came to the firm conclusion that they were not, and that God was leading us in a different direction.”¹⁵⁰ He concluded, as noted previously, that “we should be willing to work with all who were willing to work with us. Our message was clear, and if someone with a radically different theological view somehow decided to join with us in a Crusade that proclaimed Christ as the way of salvation, he or she was the one who was compromising personal convictions, not we.”¹⁵¹

This is the principle of cooperative evangelism by which Graham and his organization have operated for more than a half century: a willingness to cooperate with all other professing Christians, whatever their denominational label, who will cooperate with them for the larger purpose of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to a community. What Billy Graham has made clear in both principle and practice is that he will not change or compromise the message. The message of the gospel, like Jesus Christ himself, is the same yesterday, today and forever.¹⁵²

Robert O. Ferm, one of Billy Graham’s associates, wrote a book on *Cooperative Evangelism*¹⁵³ which makes the case that Graham stands in the tradition of great evangelists who came before him, such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and Billy Sunday, all of whom had engaged in cooperative evangelism with people whose beliefs did not conform completely with their own. Like Graham, they did so for the sake of the proclamation of the gospel.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 303-304.

¹⁵² See Hebrews 13:8.

¹⁵³ Robert O. Ferm, *Cooperative Evangelism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 1958.

As Sterling Huston points out, cooperative evangelism does not mean that everybody involved in the effort totally agrees with everybody else theologically. Nor does it mean that everybody involved is in total agreement methodologically. Cooperative evangelism does not mean that those who cooperate are changing their theological positions or compromising their doctrinal distinctives. They are not moving from Calvinist to Arminian, from Arminian to Calvinist, from conservative to liberal, or liberal to conservative, or to some other doctrinal position.¹⁵⁴ Cooperative evangelism simply involves a united commitment to a common purpose: to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to a community, city or area, by means of a common method, such as crusade evangelism. It does not require everyone to be pressed into the same theological, methodological, or ecclesiastical mold. It is merely an agreement to work together, temporarily putting aside those things in which believers may have differences, in order to focus on the essential message of the gospel and the need for unbelievers to come to saving faith in Christ.¹⁵⁵

This, for Billy Graham, has always been the bottom line: getting the gospel out to unbelievers so that they could respond and come to faith in Christ. He has said: “As long as there is a soul to be won to Christ, I’m under orders by the Lord to go try to win that soul to Christ.”¹⁵⁶ It is this compulsion to reach as many unbelievers as possible that led Graham to the strategic decision to part company with his fundamentalist brethren and their separatistic ways. He would not compromise the

¹⁵⁴ Huston, *The Billy Graham Crusade Handbook*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵⁶ Mary Bishop, *Billy Graham: The Man and His Ministry* (New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1978), p. 32. Quoted in Janet Lowe, *Billy Graham Speaks*, p. 67.

gospel, but he would work with those who were willing to work with him for the sake of the gospel.

One criticism of Graham's method of cooperative evangelism is the practice of referring "inquirers" at his crusades, those who come forward in response to his invitation and fill out a decision card, to the church listed as preference on the card by the inquirer. This church may be known to be a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, evangelical church where a new believer can receive a solid grounding in the faith. However, the church listed by the inquirer may be a more liberal church or a Roman Catholic church, where, for evangelicals, the prospects of a new believer receiving sound biblical teaching and the tools for spiritual growth are less than optimistic. This tension between the way it is and the way we might wish it to be is one of the effects of the strategy of the Graham organization to cooperate with all who were willing to cooperate with them in the work of crusade evangelism.

In this regard, Sterling Huston says that two priorities govern the policy regarding the referral of inquirers: the spiritual growth of the inquirer, and maintaining healthy relationships between churches.¹⁵⁷ In filling out the information on the decision card, counselors ask inquirers for their church preference, or the name of the church they attend regularly. If they do not have a church preference or a church home, they are asked if a particular church brought them to the crusade. The information is recorded on the decision card, and then passed on to the follow-up team. Information from these cards is then referred to local churches according to four specific guidelines:

¹⁵⁷ Huston, *The Billy Graham Crusade Handbook*, p. 85.

1. When an inquirer names a participating church (as determined by the local follow-up committee) as his or her stated preference, information is sent to that church for their follow up of the inquirer.
2. When inquirers do not have a church preference or a church home, information is sent to the closest participating church to the inquirer's home address, regardless of denomination.
3. When inquirers name a sect, cult, or non-Christian group as their religious preference, information is sent to the closest participating church to the inquirer's home address.
4. When inquirers name a non-participating church (other than the categories named above) as their preference, all other steps of the follow-up process are implemented except church referral. Since the inquirer's church is not participating in the crusade, his or her permission is needed before referral can take place.¹⁵⁸

If a church is participating in a Billy Graham Crusade, it is assumed that the church, whatever its denominational affiliation or doctrinal distinctives, is supportive of the primary objective of the Crusade, which is to "proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, to invite men and women to commit their lives to Christ, and to relate those who respond to a local church for continuing spiritual nurture and discipleship."¹⁵⁹ With that common commitment of purpose, Billy Graham and his organization willingly cooperate with any church that will work with them to spread the gospel in the hope of changing lives through the power of Jesus Christ.

* * * *

Near the end of his autobiography, Billy Graham writes: "I have often said that the first thing I am going to do when I get to Heaven is to ask, 'Why me, Lord? Why did You choose a farm boy from North Carolina to preach to so many people, to have such a wonderful team of associates, and to have a part in what You were doing in the latter half of the twentieth century?' I have thought about that question a great deal,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

but I know also that only God knows the answer.... One of the joys of Heaven, I am convinced, will be discovering the hidden ways that God in His sovereignty acted in our lives on earth to protect us and guide us so as to bring glory to His name, in spite of our frailty. As I look back over the years, however, I know that my deepest feeling is one of overwhelming gratitude. I cannot take credit for whatever God has chosen to accomplish through us and our ministry; only God deserves the glory, and we can never thank Him enough for the great things He has done.”¹⁶⁰

Throughout his long public life as an evangelist and evangelical leader, not only in America but around the world, Billy Graham has sought consistently to give glory to God and to point people to Jesus Christ, not to himself.

While he has been the preeminent crusade evangelist in the last half century, Billy Graham has by no means been the only evangelist whom God has used to bring unbelievers to faith in Jesus Christ. Graham’s son, Franklin Graham, who began preaching in 1989, serves as head of Samaritan’s Purse, an international relief organization founded by Bob Pierce. In recent years he has devoted more time to “Festivals of Evangelism” across America and around the world. Since 1989, he has preached to more than four million people in cities from Johannesburg, South Africa to Tupelo, Mississippi.¹⁶¹ The mantle of leadership of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was passed to a new generation when Franklin Graham was appointed CEO of the organization in 2000 and then president in 2001.

Latin American-born Luis Palau, who has had an effective international evangelistic ministry since the 1960s, has looked to Billy Graham for guidance and

¹⁶⁰ Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 723.

¹⁶¹ www.billygraham.org/mediaRelations/bios.asp?p=3. Accessed October 15, 2006.

has, in some ways, modeled his ministry after that of Graham. It is remarkable, as Keith Hardman notes, that there could be two evangelists of the stature of Graham and Palau at the same time, independent and yet supportive of each other.¹⁶² The next chapter will examine Palau's ministry and methods.

¹⁶² Hardman, p. 265.

CHAPTER FOUR

LUIS PALAU: FESTIVAL EVANGELISM

Luis Palau has been called “the Billy Graham of Latin America.”¹ While not as well known around the world as Graham, Palau has had a remarkable international ministry for more than four decades. His passion is to reach the masses with the gospel of Jesus Christ, inspired by the words of Robert Moffat, the Scottish pioneer missionary to South Africa: “We shall have all eternity in which to celebrate our victories, but we have only one swift hour before the sunset in which to win the lost to Christ.”² There is, Palau says, “no greater thrill than leading someone to Christ.”³

A native of Argentina, Palau was born in Buenos Aires on November 27, 1934, the first grandson of European emigrants. His father’s family had come from Spain; his mother was half French and half Scottish. His father, a successful businessman, died when Luis was ten years old. Soon after his father’s death, Palau was sent off to St. Alban’s College, an exclusive, all-boys Anglican boarding school which was part of the Cambridge University overseas program.⁴ In 1947, on a summer camping trip, he received Jesus Christ as Savior. He wrote the date – February 12, 1947 – and the words – “I received Jesus Christ” – in his Bible.⁵ After a bumpy period in his spiritual life in which his spiritual fervor waned, Palau rededicated his life to Christ in 1951.

¹ Many have referred to Palau this way. Palau himself cites a journalist he does not identify as having first used the designation during Palau’s 1970 crusade in Mexico City. See Luis Palau, *Calling America and the Nations to Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), p. 102.

² Ibid., p. vi.

³ Ibid., p. 140.

⁴ According to Palau, completion of the rigorous program at St. Alban’s was the equivalent of four years of high school and several years of college, qualifying graduates for graduate study at Cambridge University. Ibid., p. 12.

⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

Upon graduation from St. Alban's, at the age of seventeen, Palau began a promising career in the banking industry. While continuing in banking, he began preaching at the age of eighteen in his hometown of Cordoba. Frustrated at the lack of results from his preaching, he decided to give God a deadline. If there were no converts through his preaching by the end of the year, he would give up preaching. He would still be an active Christian, but, as Palau saw it, "there was no use preaching evangelistically if no one was coming to Christ." When the end of the year came and went with no converts, Palau concluded he did not have the gift of evangelism. A few days into the new year, he purchased a Spanish language edition of Billy Graham's *The Secret of Happiness*, and devoured Graham's teachings on the Beatitudes. That evening he attended a Bible study whose regular speaker was absent. Pressed into service, Palau turned to the Beatitudes and repeated as many of Billy Graham's points as he could recall. When he read Matthew 5:8, which says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God," a woman stood up and began to cry. She said: "Somebody help me! My heart is not pure. How am I going to find God?" Luis Palau was able to share the hope of the gospel with her, and that evening she found peace with God and a pure heart through faith in Jesus Christ. What Luis Palau learned that evening, he says, is that it is the Holy Spirit who does the convicting in evangelism. The evangelist is just the vehicle. "God used me in spite of myself," says Palau, "and he did it in his own good time."⁶ That resolved Palau's doubts about having the gift of evangelism to go along with his passion for it.

Having read eye-opening reports of Billy Graham's 1949 Los Angeles Campaign and his 1954 London Crusade, Palau began to dream of reaching

⁶ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

Argentina and all of Latin America for Christ through mass evangelism. Though he continued to work for the Bank of London, he devoted more and more of his time to evangelistic tent meetings.

Late in 1958 Palau had what he calls an “appointment with destiny”⁷ when Dick Hillis, the head of a missionary organization known as Overseas Crusades (now OC International), and Ray Stedman, a popular pastor and Bible teacher from Palo Alto, California, came to Argentina. Impressed with Palau, Stedman offered him the opportunity to come to the United States to study at Dallas Theological Seminary. While thrilled by the offer, Palau declined, saying he did not want to spend four years in school. He was also concerned about the welfare of his family, for whom he was the primary breadwinner.

Soon after, Palau left his position with the bank and began work for SEPAL, the Latin American division of Overseas Crusades, translating from English into Spanish for their magazine, *La Voz* (The Voice). In 1960 he began to do church-planting work with SEPAL, and gave his first public invitation on May 25 in Oncativo, Argentina. He asked all those who wanted to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior to pray with him. He then asked those who had prayed with him to raise their hands to signify their decision. When almost three dozen hands went up, he felt sure something was wrong. The people must have felt pressured in some way. So he explained the gospel again, to make it clear to all his listeners. He wanted to be sure they understood the significance of trusting Christ. They prayed again, and this time even more hands went up, signifying their response to the gospel. By the end of the week, Palau says,

⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

seventy people had professed their faith in Jesus Christ. The new believers received training in the faith and a new church was established.

Though Palau had spurned his earlier offer, Ray Stedman did not stop pursuing him. Stedman told Palau of a one-year graduate course in theology at Multnomah Biblical Seminary in Portland, Oregon. Palau's studies would be financed by some Christian businessmen. He would also have the opportunity to spend a few months before and after the school year at Stedman's church in Palo Alto along with a student from Dallas Seminary named Charles Swindoll.⁸ It was an offer Luis Palau could not refuse.

While at Multnomah, Palau met Patricia (Pat) Scofield, a fellow student. After a brief courtship, the two were married on August 5, 1961. Following a two-week honeymoon, they began a seven-month missionary internship with OC International in Detroit, Michigan.

In July 1962, Palau served as a volunteer with Billy Graham's crusade team in Fresno, California. Palau recalls: "I was so sure evangelism was what I was called to that I was like a hawk in Fresno. I didn't miss a thing. I asked questions of everyone, kept a thick notebook on every detail, and learned the mechanics of mobilizing thousands of people. I tagged along with Bill Brown, the Fresno crusade director, and also visited Spanish churches in the area to urge them to fully cooperate with and participate in the Graham crusade meetings at Ratcliffe Stadium."⁹ At a pre-crusade breakfast Palau met Billy Graham for the first time. When Palau told Graham of his desire to hold evangelistic crusades, Graham advised him to concentrate on the big

⁸ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

cities: “Paul always went to the centers of population,” said Graham. “And Mr. Moody used to say that the cities were the mountains, and if you won the mountains, the valleys took care of themselves.”¹⁰

In 1964, OC International sent Palau first to Guatemala and then to Colombia, where he was involved in evangelistic work, church planting, and training nationals in evangelism. He began a daily evangelistic radio program broadcast from HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, which is still heard not only throughout Latin America but in over forty countries around the world. In 1965, seeking to harness the power of television in order to advance the gospel, Palau began a live television counseling program called *Responde*, in which viewers were invited to call in to speak directly with Palau about their personal problems or questions concerning the gospel. He held his first citywide crusade in Bogota, Colombia, in December 1966, speaking to a crowd of 20,000 on the opening day of the crusade.

Over the next several years, Palau and his evangelistic team would hold crusades throughout Latin America. In 1974 Palau held his first European crusade in Seville, Spain. The following year he served as Billy Graham’s interpreter in Mexico City. Later that year, in a strategy called “Continente ’75,” the Palau team broadcast the gospel on fifty-six radio stations (live) and more than one hundred television stations (taped) from New York to Punta Arenas, Chile, the southern-most city in the world, reaching an estimated 80 million people in twenty-three nations with the claims of Jesus Christ.¹¹ In 1979 Palau held crusades in both Australia and Scotland, as well as Caracas, Venezuela. The next year, in 1980, he led crusades and rallies in

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 122.

ten British cities, six cities in Scotland, and six South American cities.¹² Palau returned to Scotland for a five-week crusade in Glasgow in 1981, holding services in Kelvin Hall where Billy Graham had preached in 1955. Reminiscent of the Graham organization's Operation Andrew, the Palau team trained hundreds of "friendship evangelists," committed Christians who agreed to pray by name for several family members and neighbors, work associates, and friends who had not received Jesus Christ as Savior. These friendship evangelists were then urged to invite those for whom they were praying to come to the crusade meetings at Kelvin Hall.¹³

Palau's first large-scale event in the United States was a Spanish-language crusade in Los Angeles in 1980. His first English-language crusade in the U.S. was held in San Diego the following year. While he would hold an average of one a year on American soil for the next several years, it was not until 1989 that Palau sensed a "green light" from God to accelerate his work in the U.S. by holding several crusades a year and by making greater use of media in America.¹⁴

Palau had become a naturalized American citizen in the early 1960s. His burden for the spiritual welfare of his adopted homeland grew ever larger, even as he continued to preach the gospel around the world, from South America to Singapore and Eastern Europe. Out of his tremendous respect for Billy Graham, Palau felt a need to seek Graham's blessing to expand his ministry in the U.S. Explaining the burden for America he had carried for many years, he said to Graham: "I feel the time has come that I should accept more crusade invitations in the States and really go for the bigger cities. But I want to feel that I have your full blessing."

¹² Keith Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), p. 268.

¹³ Palau, p. 151.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 162.

Graham replied: “Well, you don’t need (my blessing.) But if you want it, you’ve got it. Get on with it! Everybody talks about evangelizing America. Now let’s really do it.”¹⁵

Palau’s concern for America did not lead him to neglect other parts of the world. In May 1990, following crusades in Hong Kong, Denmark, India, Wales, the Soviet Union and Thailand, Palau and his team witnessed a remarkable response to their ministry in the formerly communist nation of Romania. Just two days after the nation held its first free election in more than fifty years, Palau preached throughout Romania, with an estimated 46,100 individuals making commitments to Christ. It was the largest response ever in Palau’s twenty-four years of mass evangelism.¹⁶ The following year Palau returned to Romania and held crusades in five cities. One evening nearly 80 percent of his audience (8,100 out of an audience of 10,500) responded to his invitation to come forward to the platform if they would place their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. In the same stadium the night before, nearly 60 percent of the audience (8,120 out of a crowd of 14,000) responded to Palau’s invitation. As Keith Hardman notes, these astonishing figures may be the highest response percentages in the history of mass evangelism.¹⁷

Since the early 1990s, Luis Palau has continued to preach the gospel in crusades in the United States, in Latin America, and around the world. Based in Portland, Oregon, Palau is the author of several books, including *High Definition Life*, *Where Is God When Bad Things Happen?*, *God Is Relevant*, *It’s a God Thing*, and his autobiography, *Calling America and the Nations to Christ*. He is heard daily on more

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁶ Hardman, p. 268.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 269.

than 900 Spanish language radio stations and another 900 English language stations in 42 countries around the world. He has had the opportunity to proclaim the gospel to more than 20 million people in 70 countries during a ministry that now spans more than four decades.

The mission of the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association (LPEA) is three-fold: To proclaim the gospel, to mobilize the church, and to equip the next generation. The LPEA mission statement reads:

Proclaim the Gospel

In dependence upon God, we want to win as many people as possible to Jesus Christ throughout the world, proclaiming His Good News by all available means to the millions of people who have yet to respond to the Gospel.

Mobilize the Church

In dependence upon God, we want to emphasize with the Church the principles of victorious Christian living (Galatians 2:20), so as to stimulate, revive, train, and mobilize the Church to continuous, effective evangelism, follow-up, and church growth.

Equip the Next Generation

In dependence upon God, we want to hold high the banner of biblical evangelism, influencing Christianity worldwide and raising up a new generation of godly leaders, so that the Church's commitment to evangelism will never die.¹⁸

I. THE FESTIVAL MODEL OF EVANGELISM

While Luis Palau has employed the traditional crusade model of mass evangelism most commonly identified with Billy Graham throughout most of his ministry, he made a strategic decision in the late 1990s to transition from the crusade model to a new model of festival evangelism. Sensing that the older model was losing its effectiveness, Palau's three sons who are involved in his ministry, Kevin, Keith, and Andrew, persuaded their father that a significant shift in format was needed in order to reach today's youth and the unchurched.

¹⁸ www.palau.org/lpea/about/mission.php. Accessed October 26, 2006.

Unlike the traditional crusade, the festival takes place not in a stadium or an arena, but usually in a large downtown park or at a beachfront location. With the theme “Great Music! Good News!,” the two-day family-friendly festival includes a variety of components:

- A Children’s Area with activities such as face-painting, balloons, slides, moon bounces, and games, along with special appearances by the VeggieTales characters, Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber. Several times during the day a clear gospel message is presented in the Children’s Area, and trained counselors are available to talk and pray with children who want to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.
- An Extreme Sports Area with world-class skate-boarding and BMX demonstrations on a specially-constructed 10,000 square foot skate park. After each demonstration, a gospel presentation is given with the invitation to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.
- A Sports Zone with appearances by prominent amateur and professional athletes who participate in fan “meet-and-greets” and give their testimonies of faith in Christ.
- A Food Court where festival attenders can buy food of all kinds.
- “Great Music” presented by nationally-known guest artists such as Steven Curtis Chapman, Third Day, CeCe Winans, dc Talk, Blind Boys of Alabama, Toby Mac and Jump 5.

- The “Good News” of Jesus Christ presented by Luis Palau at least twice during the festival on the main stage and by others at different venues throughout the festival.
- “Operation Compassion” expresses the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by meeting tangible physical needs in the local community through food drives, home construction with Habitat for Humanity, or some other way.
- Corporate Sponsors are solicited to help cover the costs of the festival, and to make it feel “normal” and safe to the unchurched. Corporate sponsors sometimes contribute as much as 20 percent of the festival budget.
- Free Admission to all festival events. No offerings are taken at any festival event. The festival is funded beforehand through the commitment of churches, individuals, and corporate sponsors. No tickets are needed for the festival. It is open to all who will come.¹⁹

Since 1999, when Palau began implementing the festival model, more than five million people worldwide have attended his festivals. Palau has held festivals in such American cities as Portland, Oregon; Fargo, North Dakota; and Tucson, Arizona (2000); Boise, Idaho and Santa Cruz, California (2001); Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; Syracuse, New York; and Seattle, Washington (2002); Fort Lauderdale, Florida (2003); Reno, Nevada and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota (2004); Bend, Oregon and Washington, D.C. (2005); and Orlando, Florida and Houston, Texas (2006). He has also held evangelistic festivals in several cities in his native Argentina, as well as Lima, Peru; San Jose, Costa Rica; Madrid Spain; and Manchester, England.

¹⁹ This summary of the major components of the festival model is adapted from material found at www.globaleventsgrouppdx.com/luispalau/luispalaufestivalinfo2.html. Accessed October 18, 2006.

Some 300,000 people attended the two-day “Beachfest” in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 2003.²⁰ According to festival organizers, attendance at Palau’s “CityFest Houston” in October 2006 was 225,000.²¹ Not all of Palau’s festivals have been as wildly successful, as judged by attendance figures. Attendance at the October 2005 “D.C. Festival on the National Mall” with Luis Palau totaled only about 50,000 for the two days.²² Poor weather hindered participation significantly, as torrential rains the first day of the festival forced the cancellation of several activities and limited attendance severely. Palau’s April 2006 Orlando (Florida) Festival drew approximately 85,000 people.²³

One of the most significant innovations of the Palau team in developing the festival format is the use of the “extreme sports” of skateboarding and BMX riding to connect with today’s youth culture and then to communicate the gospel in a context and language to which today’s youth are able to relate. World-class skateboarders and BMX riders put on demonstrations for standing-room only crowds at each festival, with a gospel presentation and invitation to receive Christ given by speakers such as Paul Anderson, known as “the skate evangelist,”²⁴ or pastor and professional skater Jay Alabama.

Following Palau’s 2003 “BeachFest” in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, actor and film maker Stephen Baldwin entered into a partnership with Luis Palau’s son Kevin, who originated the extreme sports outreach at the festivals, to produce an outreach tool

²⁰ This is the crowd estimate made by the Fort Lauderdale police. See *Proclaim!*, May 2003, p. 2.

²¹ www.cityfesthouston.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=10743. Accessed October 26, 2006.

²² www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=21826. Shannon Baker, “Luis Palau’s DC Festival draws 50,000 in nation’s capital,” October 11, 2005. Accessed October 18, 2006.

²³ John M. DeMarco, “El Predicador Bilingue (The Bilingual Preacher),” *Charisma*, August 2006, p. 41.

²⁴ Jay Fordice, “Reaching a New Crowd,” *Proclaim!*, 2004, Volume 1, p. 10.

called *Livin' It*, a documentary DVD which combines world class skateboarding and BMX riding with evangelism. The youngest of the acting Baldwin brothers (Alec, Billy and Daniel are his older brothers), Stephen Baldwin has appeared in more than sixty movies, including "The Usual Suspects," "8 Seconds," and "A Simple Twist of Fate," as well as such television shows as "The Young Riders" and "Celebrity Mole." Baldwin became a Christian through the influence of his Brazilian housekeeper and his wife Kennya shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Following his conversion, Baldwin met Luis Palau at Palau's Syracuse, New York Festival in 2002. A vision began to form in his mind and heart to take the skate culture and, using his expertise in the film world, to develop an outreach tool that would reach today's skateboarders and BMX bikers with the gospel. Baldwin points out that in 2002, for the first time in America, more kids were actively pursuing skateboarding than were playing baseball.²⁵

The need for this kind of creative evangelistic outreach is obvious, and is a prime example of the Palau organization's willingness to change their methods with the changing times, in order to reach more people, especially the younger generation, with the message of the gospel. As Baldwin, a regular at Palau festivals, describes it, "*Livin' It* is a demonstration of extremely talented athletes who love God, who want to share that experience in a DVD, showing their talents and their tricks, and then in many of the bonus features is their testimony....We set it to some awesome, new, edgy contemporary Christian music that people hear and they go, 'That music was Christian?' That was the goal, to create something very cool that the kids could watch

²⁵ www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week736/interview1.html. Interview: Stephen Baldwin, *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, May 7, 2004. Accessed October 26, 2006.

and then explore the DVD, go to those bonus features, hear the testimonies, hear about what's going on in the lives of these guys they admire and look up to, and then hopefully be touched by it.”²⁶

The partnership between Baldwin and Kevin Palau has grown from the original *Livin' It* DVD to a nationwide extreme sports tour, including a series of action sport DVDs, nationwide television specials, and a commitment to sharing the gospel in a way that today's youth can relate to and understand.²⁷

This is the goal not only of *Livin' It*, but of the events which take place in the Extreme Sports Zone at each Palau festival. The skateboarding and BMX demonstrations are impressive and consistently draw big crowds, but they are done with a larger purpose in mind. The larger purpose, as with all the festival events, is to provide an opportunity for the audience to hear and respond to the gospel.

II. THE LUIS PALAU D.C. FESTIVAL

Luis Palau held a two-day festival of evangelism on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. on October 8 and 9, 2005. The church I serve as pastor, Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Kingstowne, Virginia, located in the northern Virginia suburbs of the nation's capital, just one mile outside the Capital Beltway, was one of nearly 900 supporting churches and Christian organizations. Our church's support of the festival included a financial contribution toward the festival budget, publicity, prayer, recruitment of counselors and other volunteers to serve at the festival, participation in planning meetings, and the encouragement of church members to pray for, invite and bring unbelieving friends to the festival.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ www.palau.org/lpea/ministries/skate.php. “Livin' It – Reaching the Next Generation.” Accessed October 26, 2006.

With years of experience behind them in planning festivals, the Palau team operates like a well-oiled machine. Luis Palau's son Andrew, who serves as National Director of Festivals, arrived in the Washington area a full year before the D.C. Festival. Along with Nick Greener, the Director of Church Relations for the Festival, Andrew played a key role in establishing and building relationships with churches and church leaders across many denominations in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Both Greener and Andrew Palau visited Faith Church personally. Greener spoke to a Saturday morning breakfast gathering, while Palau spoke briefly at both of our worship services on a Sunday morning in March 2005.

Both Andrew Palau and Greener were articulate, personable, winsome spokesmen for Luis Palau and the Festival. However, in reflecting on their interactions with our congregation and church leaders, as well as meetings with Festival organizers attended by key leaders from Faith Church, the focus seemed almost exclusively to be on "What can you (the churches) do for us (the Palau organization)?" It seemed that the Palau team had come to the D.C. area with a pre-determined plan, assuming that what had been successful in other cities would surely be successful in the nation's capital. There was, however, an unfortunate insensitivity to the challenging spiritual dynamics of ministry in the capital region. In the end, the Festival may have been a much greater success (in terms of those responding to the gospel message) if Luis Palau and his team had made a concerted effort to enter into a genuine partnership with the churches and para-church ministries of the region in order to discern the most effective ways to reach the multitudes of unbelievers and skeptics who live and work here, and to communicate the gospel most effectively to

them. While this criticism is significant, it does not diminish either the value or validity of the Festival Model or the D.C. Festival itself.

(It is interesting to note that, like Franklin Graham, Andrew Palau was a prodigal in his younger years, rebelling against the faith of his father. But, as a young adult in his mid-20s, after years of resistance, Andrew was arrested by the gospel and came to faith in Christ at a crusade led by his father in Jamaica. Now, with his father advancing in age – Luis Palau is 72 years old at this writing – Andrew, like Franklin Graham, is being groomed as his father’s successor.)

The Palau organization and the festival planning team placed a significant emphasis on prayer. A prayer committee was formed, made up of men and women from different denominations and races. According to Richard Nilsen, the prayer committee chairman who coordinated the prayer ministry for the D.C. Festival, the Palau team considered prayer the top priority in the preparations for the festival.²⁸ For several months prior to the festival, the prayer committee met regularly for prayer and kept supporting churches updated through e-mail regarding prayer requests for the festival. The focus on prayer also included prayer walks on the National Mall and several neighborhoods, a prayer rally preceding the festival, and a prayer tent at the festival itself. Sustained prayer for the festival took place at the prayer tent throughout the festival. In addition, individuals who desired prayer for any reason could come to the prayer tent and meet with a member of the prayer team.

The Palau team also made a significant effort to build up the Christian community in the metro D.C. area by providing training opportunities in friendship evangelism. The Willow Creek Association’s Mark Mittelberg, co-author of

²⁸ Richard Nilsen, interview by author, Kingstowne, Virginia, November 3, 2006.

Becoming a Contagious Christian, former NFL star Rickey Bolden, and actor Stephen Baldwin led a friendship evangelism training seminar to help Christians learn how to share their faith with confidence. Youth friendship evangelism rallies featuring Greg Stier, founder of Dare2Share, were held as well. In addition, two dozen counselor training seminars were held to equip “friendship evangelists” to assist those who respond to Luis Palau’s invitation to receive Christ or to recommit their lives to him in faith.

Twelve people from Faith Church, including this writer, went through the two-hour counselor training, which was well-designed and engagingly led. While both the training seminar and the materials were valuable, additional time, particularly for role-playing situations with individuals who responded to Luis Palau’s message, would have been beneficial for counselors.

In all, more than 3,500 counselors were trained as “first responders” to those who indicated a response to the gospel message given by Luis Palau or any of the other presenters at the festival. Clearly identified at the festival by their white visors and armed with a special Luis Palau Festival Edition of the Starting Point Study Bible (Good News Translation),²⁹ counselors were equipped to approach individuals who raised their hands in response to Palau’s invitation, to determine the inquirer’s intent in raising his or her hand, and to lead the inquirer through the appropriate commitment section of the Study Bible. These sections include a first-time commitment to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; a section to review and clarify the basic facts of the gospel message for someone with questions about it; and

²⁹ This Festival Edition of the Starting Point Study Bible contains the Gospel of John and selected notes by Luis Palau and others.

a section for rededication or recommitment of one's life to Christ. After explaining the various sections of the Study Bible booklet to the inquirer, the counselor would then fill out the response card and pray with the inquirer and any accompanying friends or family.

Unfortunately, on both evenings of the D.C. Festival, when Luis Palau gave the invitation for people to make a response to the gospel message, the directions given were different from the instructions counselors had received in the pre-Festival training. Counselors had been instructed that Luis Palau would give an invitation at the conclusion of his message, urging those who did not know Christ to receive him as Savior and Lord, and those who had drifted away from God to rededicate their lives to him. Palau would lead the crowd in a prayer, then ask all those who had prayed the prayer with him (to receive Christ or to recommit their lives to him) to raise their hands. Counselors wearing their official visors would then go to those near them who had raised their hands to talk and pray with them about their response.

On Saturday evening, however, the directions given at the invitation were changed at the last minute, resulting in confusion on the part of many counselors. Because of the rain, people were encouraged to go to meet counselors under a tent near the main stage as well as raise their hands. To get out of the rain, many people crowded into the tent, leaving many counselors outside the tent with no one to counsel. It is hoped that every person who responded did talk with a counselor. But one counselor on the scene Saturday evening considered the change in plan to be a mistake: "I personally felt it was a serious tactical error. The Festival team had

marched 99 yards down the field to the one yard line, and then not punched the ball into the end zone to score a touchdown for Christ.”³⁰

On Sunday, with much better weather and a much larger crowd, there was yet another glitch at the critical moment of the invitation. On this occasion, as Palau concluded his message with a call to respond to the gospel, he asked everyone in the audience, including those who were already followers of Christ, to say the prayer of commitment with him. Then, after the prayer, he asked those who had prayed the prayer with him to raise their hands. Nearly every person in the audience of thousands raised a hand. This made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for counselors to determine whom they should seek out, since many of those who raised their hands were already believers who were not making a new or renewed commitment to Christ.

Still, despite the confusion, in the sovereignty of God, the Palau team reported over 3,100 response cards received as a result of the D.C. Festival. This includes 216 on the rain-soaked Saturday, nearly 1,600 on Sunday, and almost 1,400 more at pre-Festival affinity events.³¹ These affinity events included services at the Pentagon and the Naval Academy in nearby Annapolis, a women’s luncheon, a luncheon for business and civic leaders, a golf clinic and luncheon, and a Latino rally. In terms of the response to the gospel message, these affinity events were more effective in reaching unbelievers than were the large scale Festival events. This is likely due to the fact that for some of the affinity events, at least – such as the women’s luncheon,

³⁰ Leonard Deibert to Neil Smith, “Observations about the Palau Festival in Washington, October 8-9, 2005,” June 20, 2006. Deibert, a retired Washington news journalist, is an elder at Faith Church. He served on the D.C. Festival prayer committee and as a counselor at the Festival.

³¹ Ibid. The numbers provided by Deibert came from the Palau organization.

the business and civic leaders' luncheon, and the golf clinic and luncheon – Christian believers were intentional about inviting and bringing their unbelieving friends or associates to the event.

As with crusade evangelism, having believers invite and bring non-believers to the festival is a critical key to the success of the festival model of evangelism. Luis Palau estimates that more than 70 percent of those who make decisions for Christ at Palau Festivals are brought by a friend.³² In this regard, while the Palau team speaks of mass evangelism, they also view each festival as an occasion for “personal evangelism on a large scale,”³³ as individual believers are encouraged and motivated to invite and bring their unbelieving or seeking friends to the festival where they will hear the gospel in a clear, inviting, and non-confrontational manner.

In the tradition of Billy Graham's “Operation Andrew,”³⁴ the Palau team distributed prayer cards in participating churches, urging believers to write down the names of several unbelieving friends, family members, or co-workers for whom they would pray with the intention of inviting and bringing them to the D.C. Festival.

This emphasis on personal invitations points out one of the greatest potential strengths and, at the same time, one of the greatest potential weaknesses, of both the festival and crusade models of evangelism. Both models depend on attracting in large numbers those who need to hear the gospel message. More often than not, unbelievers will not come to either a crusade service or a festival rally unless they are invited by a friend, family member, or co-worker. Even then, they may not come unless the one

³² Luis Palau, “D.C.Festival Letter,” April 29, 2005.

³³ Andrew Palau, speaking at Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Kingstowne, Virginia, March 20, 2005.

³⁴ See discussion of Operation Andrew in Chapter 3.

who extends the invitation actually brings them to the event. This demonstrates the critical importance of personal relationships, even in the work of mass evangelism. There is a much greater likelihood of reaching unbelievers with the gospel in crusade and festival evangelism if believers understand their responsibility and take the initiative to invite and bring those non-Christians in their sphere of influence to the events where they will hear the message of the gospel in a clear and winsome way. If believers drop the ball and fail to bring their unbelieving friends or family members, the crusade or festival cannot fulfill its primary purpose, which is to evangelize the community and win as many people as possible to Jesus Christ.

At the D.C. Festival, one had the sense that it was more of a Christian family festival than an evangelistic event designed to reach unbelievers. This is not because the gospel message was either unclear or diluted. It was not. The message of the gospel was communicated clearly and consistently. Nor was it because of the format or structure of the festival. It was, by design, family-friendly. It was a safe and welcoming environment for families, both Christian and non-Christian alike.

What gave it the feel of a Christian family festival is the sense that the overwhelming majority of those on the National Mall for the D.C. Festival were already believers. This is, admittedly, not a scientifically verifiable observation. Faith Church's experience, however, may be indicative. Only two of more than twenty respondents to a survey of Faith Church members who attended the Festival indicated that they had a non-Christian friend or family member with them at the Festival.³⁵ More than half of the survey respondents indicated that they had invited one or more

³⁵ Neil Smith, "D.C. Festival Survey," December 2006, Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Kingstowne, Virginia.

unbelievers to attend the Festival with them, but their unbelieving friends or family members did not come. Several other respondents said that because they were serving as volunteers at the Festival, they did not think they could give sufficient attention to any guest they invited. Quite possibly other churches had a better record than Faith. The distinct impression, nevertheless, was of a gathering that was predominantly Christian.

To a significant degree, the success of the festival model, like that of the crusade model, depends on the support and effectiveness of the Christian community in praying for, inviting, and bringing their non-Christian friends and family members to the festival to hear the gospel message. In the case of the D.C. Festival, the Christian community did not do its job. Or, perhaps, the task was considerably more difficult than either the Palau organization or the Christian community in the metro Washington area anticipated. As a result, the Festival was not as effective or fruitful as it could have been.

* * * *

In his message to the crowd at the D.C. Festival on Sunday, October 9, 2005, Luis Palau said: “Some of you were brought up in a Christian home, and then you became a hypocrite. No one can become a better hypocrite than someone who is brought up in a Christian home. We become little movie stars – you go to church on Sunday and all the parents in the church say, ‘Isn’t he a good boy?’ And then on Monday you go to high school and are a hypocrite again. And you say, ‘Luis, I’ve been a hypocrite forever. I don’t know the Son of God, and I’ve gone too far.’”

“Listen right now. Wherever you are, Jesus Christ has his arms extended, and he says, ‘Come, come follow me, and I will forgive all your burdens, and I will forgive your conscience.’ The blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin. If you believe that he died on the cross for your sins, he will give (you) a shower in your soul. He will bury the past behind you. He will free you up so that you can have a clean conscience....

“My friends, listen to this, listen to the news of God: ‘Your sins and evil behavior I will remember no more,’ says the Lord....When he says, ‘Your sins and evil behavior I will remember no more,’ that is exactly what he means.

“But you may say, ‘Luis, how did he do that?’ He did that in the cross....

“I know it’s a mystery, I don’t understand it, but I’ve seen rich people and poor people, famous people and unknown people – their lives absolutely changed the moment they opened their heart to Jesus Christ.

“If you believe, all your sins are forgiven forever. That’s what he did on the cross. And you know, after death, there’s (sic) only two destinations: heaven or hell. I would love for all of you to go to heaven. God says he wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God says to man he wants you to be saved and Jesus to come into your heart.

“I’ll tell you what you have to do. You have to open your heart and receive Jesus Christ. I did it when I was 12 years old. Whatever your age, it is never too late to receive Jesus Christ. You must be honest and confess that you have sinned. Second, believe that he is the Son of God – just believe.

“If you believe that and (that) he rose from the dead, all you have to do is open your heart and listen. He says, ‘I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come eat with you, and you with me.’”³⁶

This is the message Luis Palau has been preaching in different venues and on different continents for more than forty years. His passion to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ has not waned. His willingness to change methods in changing times in order to reach more people, particularly a new generation of young people, with the gospel, is a positive example for all who desire to do the work of evangelism with both integrity and relevance.

The festival model is not without flaws or shortcomings. In addition to the perennial problem in mass evangelism of an audience that may be overwhelmingly already Christian, the Palau team’s follow-up strategy for new believers is not nearly as comprehensive or well-organized as that of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Referrals are made to local churches on the basis of information on response cards received from inquirers. But aside from the Starting Point Study Bible booklet which an inquirer receives from a counselor and correspondence which the inquirer receives from the Palau team for a year, there is no other specific follow-up support from the Palau organization for either the inquirer or the local church to which the inquirer is referred.

These weaknesses aside, the festival model does have many positives. It has taken what had become an outdated model of mass evangelism and has given it a new, contemporary format. Its activity-driven approach is designed specifically to appeal to youth and families with children. It takes the gospel out of venues (such as

³⁶ Quoted in *The Washington Times*, October 10, 2005, p. A2.

church buildings, stadiums, and arenas) with which it has been traditionally associated and presents it in neutral, family-friendly sites.

The methodology has changed with the changing times, but the message has not changed at all. Luis Palau's message is still the same gospel he has preached for more than forty years. And his fervor is as strong as ever. "To me," says Palau, "seeing people come into the kingdom of God is a never-tiring experience. It's everything."³⁷

In recent years, as Franklin Graham has assumed a more active role as an evangelist, he too has moved away from the traditional model of crusade evangelism as practiced for decades by his father, and has incorporated many of the innovations initiated by Palau, including the use of the word "festival" instead of "crusade."

In a sense, it is merely an attempt by Palau and Franklin Graham to be faithful to the motto of Billy Graham and his colleagues in the early days of the Youth for Christ movement, who sought to be "Geared to the Times, Anchored to the Rock."³⁸

³⁷ DeMarco, p. 47.

³⁸ See biographical background on Billy Graham in Chapter 3.

CONCLUSION

It is regrettable that Charles Finney and Asahel Nettleton and their respective supporters in the controversy over revival methods during the Second Great Awakening viewed each other as adversaries rather than allies in the cause of revival. Unquestionably their theological differences were real, but perhaps the gulf between them was not as great as Nettleton and the Old Calvinists perceived it to be. In pursuit of the commonly-held goal of the salvation of sinners and revival in the church, it is unfortunate that Finney and Nettleton could not either reconcile or rise above their differences over revival methods and present a unified front for the advancement of the gospel and the renewal of spiritual vitality in the church. The unresolved conflict between these two revival leaders and their respective allies may well have short-circuited the Second Great Awakening and caused it to run its course prematurely.

In conflicts and controversies over revival methods, the principle attributed to a seventeenth-century German Lutheran theologian named Peter Meiderlin applies:

*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.*¹

What has happened far too often in the history of evangelicalism is that differences over non-essentials (such as worship styles, mode of baptism, and the revival methods examined in this thesis) have been elevated to the status of essentials and have

¹ This maxim is often mistakenly attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo, but is not found in his writings. Meiderlin (1582-1651) expressed this principle in a tract he published in 1627, during the height of the Thirty Years' War in Europe. It has been adopted as the motto of both the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Moravian Church in North America. See Stephen J. March, "Peter Meiderlin, the Pacificator,"

www.marchsite.com/English/march_archive/ministry_section/mini_meditations/Peter_Meiderlin_the_Pacificator.doc. Accessed November 22, 2006. See also Hans Rollman, "In Essentials Unity: The Pre-History of a Restoration Movement Slogan," www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?ID=976. Accessed November 22, 2006.

resulted in unnecessary and unhealthy divisions which have diluted both the strength of the church and the vitality of its witness in the world.

It is not necessary for Arminians and Calvinists (and “Arminianized Calvinists” as well) to agree with each other about every aspect of the doctrine of salvation in order to work together in evangelism or revival. Rather than criticize or condemn our brothers and sisters in Christ whose views may be different from our own at some points, instead of magnifying our differences, we would do well to learn from the model of cooperative evangelism employed by Billy Graham and seek to cooperate, without compromising the gospel or any of the essentials of our faith, with all who will cooperate with us. And we should rejoice with one another that the gospel is being proclaimed, sinners are being brought into the kingdom of God, and the church is being strengthened as believers are renewed in their faith and commitment to Christ.

Methods are not timeless. Mega-church pastor Rick Warren observes in *The Purpose Driven Church* that we must be careful not to confuse our methods with the message. “The message,” he writes, “must never change, but the methods must change with each new generation.”² The message of the gospel itself must never be compromised or distorted. So the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians,

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:6-9).

² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), p. 61.

The message of the gospel is non-negotiable. We must be careful never to compromise it in any way. We must learn how to communicate the gospel message afresh to each new generation. But we must never change it, for the one true gospel of Jesus Christ given to us in the Word of God is an essential in which there must be unity.

But methods are not immutable. Methods are contextual. Some methods which are effective in reaching one generation with the gospel may prove to be ineffective in reaching the next. The methods of crusade evangelism which were phenomenally successful for Billy Graham in the late 1940s and 1950s were not nearly so effective in reaching the American culture of the 1990s. The innovations of festival evangelism instituted by Luis Palau within the last decade have been effective at least in drawing large crowds to a non-threatening environment where they can hear the gospel message.

Sometimes opposition to new or different methods simply reflects resistance to change. For some, new methods may elicit suspicions of a creeping liberalism to be avoided at all costs. It is always both wise and necessary to weigh our methods against the teaching of God's Word, to insure that we are doing nothing contrary to biblical teaching. There may be times, however, as was the case in New England at the time of the Second Great Awakening, when we confuse our social customs and practices with the actual teachings of the Bible. As we saw in Chapter 2, while New England social custom prohibited women from praying and speaking in public meeting at which men were also present, the apostle Paul clearly permitted the practice in 1 Corinthians 11.

While we have liberty in non-essentials, we must be careful not to employ methods which are in any way contrary either to the gospel we proclaim or to the Word of God in general. The Bible is and must always remain our final authority on all matters of faith and life. So we must subject our methods in evangelism and revival, as we subject every area of life, to the search light of biblical authority.

Revival, when all is said and done, really is a sovereign work of God. When it happens, it is a God-thing. It cannot be explained in purely sociological or psychological or methodological terms. It cannot be manufactured or manipulated by human efforts. It may be aided or hindered by human activities, but it cannot be scheduled or brought about by the efforts of men. Thus, all the methods in the world by themselves will not bring about a revival if the Holy Spirit does not cause it to happen. Even Charles Finney recognized that the right use of the constituted means will not produce a revival if God does not choose to bless it. When revival comes, it is the sovereign and gracious work of God, who acts to bring revival and spiritual renewal when, where, and how he chooses. It is sent by God, not achieved by human ingenuity.

Still, regardless of the generation or cultural context, there are certain means or measures God has always chosen to bless when he has sent revival to the church. Chief among these are prayer and the faithful preaching of the gospel message.³ On the importance of these Finney, Nettleton, Graham, and Palau would all heartily agree.

³Garth M. Rosell emphasized these in the first residency of the Revival and Reform Doctor of Ministry seminar, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC, January 2004.

Finney, his enthusiastic and effective use of new methods aside, believed that prayer played a central role in revival. In his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, Finney said: “A revival may be expected when Christians have a spirit of prayer for a revival. That is, when they pray as if their hearts were set upon it.”⁴ Further, Finney asserted that “prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to a revival, as much so as truth is.”⁵ Both the preaching of the gospel and prayer are vitally important in Finney’s view, and it is an error of enormous consequence to ignore one or the other. “Some,” Finney observed, “have zealously used truth to convert men, and laid very little stress on prayer. They have preached, and talked, and distributed tracts with great zeal, and then wondered why they had so little success. And the reason was, that they forgot to use the other branch of the means, effectual prayer. They overlooked the fact that truth, by itself, will never produce the effect, without the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit is given in answer to prayer.”⁶

In this Nettleton would no doubt agree, for he was devoted to both preaching and prayer, and considered these to be sufficient in his ministry. We have seen, as well, the high value placed on prayer in the ministries of both Billy Graham and Luis Palau.

The importance of faithful, sustained, united prayer for revival by God’s people cannot be overestimated. A.T. Pierson once said: “There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer.”⁷ The Bible

⁴ Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1868), p. 27.

⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

⁷ Quoted in J. Edwin Orr, “Prayer and Revival,” www.revival-library.org/catalogues/prayer/orr/title.htm. Accessed November 22, 2006.

urges us to “devote (ourselves) to prayer” (Colossians 4:2) and reminds us that the faithful and fervent prayers of God’s people are powerful and effective (James 5:16). We are to be as bold and persistent in our prayers for revival as a man who asks a friend for help at midnight (Luke 11:5-10) or a widow who pleads her cause before an uncaring and unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8).

Whatever other methods God may choose to bless in bringing revival to the church or a spiritual awakening to the world, it is clear that prayer is one of the essential ingredients in any work of God. There is never a time when it is not time for God’s people to pray for revival, trusting God in his sovereign wisdom and goodness to send it in his time and for his glory.

In addition to prayer, revival is also rooted in the faithful preaching of the gospel message. It is centered in the Word of God. Revival cannot be divorced from the message of the gospel communicated in the power of the Holy Spirit. Wilbur M. Smith has observed: “A revival which does not rest solidly upon the Word of God will ultimately either fade out, because there is no fountain of divine truth continually refreshing it, or it will run into dangerous and sensational emotionalism, which, after it has passed, will make those who have been the subjects of such an experience dry and indifferent to the things of God, at times more easily accessible than ever to the inroads of Satan himself. There is something about the Word of God that men recognize as divine: when it is preached men know they are hearing the Word of God,

and nothing less will ever arouse a nation sunk in selfishness, self-satisfaction, and godlessness.”⁸

Just as God has graciously sent revival at different times and seasons in the past in response to the prayers of his people, so he has used – and continues to use – the faithful preaching of the gospel message by flawed, imperfect human vessels (what the apostle Paul calls “jars of clay” in 2 Corinthians 4:7) to bring sinners to saving faith in Christ, to awaken slumbering saints, to revive the church, and to inspire his people to follow him with their full devotion. Each of the principal subjects of this thesis – Charles Finney, Asahel Nettleton, Billy Graham, and Luis Palau – was or is flawed and fallible. None of them is without shortcomings. Yet God used each of them in remarkable ways to communicate the gospel, to convert sinners and to revitalize the church.

The power is not in the “jars of clay” God chooses to use. The power is not in the messengers of the gospel, but in the message. Paul declares: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for everyone who believes....For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” (Romans 1:16-17). The power is in the message. And it is the power of God himself, whose message it is. “Faith comes from hearing the message,” the Bible says in Romans 10:17, “and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

Throughout history, God has used men and women of different backgrounds and temperaments, different languages and preaching styles, to revive the church and to bring unbelievers to faith in Christ. Like Charles Finney, Asahel Nettleton, Billy

⁸ Wilbur M. Smith, *The Glorious Revival under King Hezekiah*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954), p. 25. Quoted in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Revive Us Again* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), p. 12.

Graham, and Luis Palau, they have faithfully preached a gospel of repentance from sin and of trusting faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In his sovereign goodness, God has used both the prayers of his people and the preaching of his Word to bring “times of refreshing” (Acts 3:19)⁹ to both the church and the world. May we pray and preach with faithfulness and fervor, with passion and persistence, in the hope that God will graciously send revival again in our time, to the glory of his name.

⁹ Revival historian J. Edwin Orr takes his definition of revival from this verse. Orr defines revival as “times of refreshing from the Lord.” Quoted in Kaiser, p.7.

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VITA

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